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**ART AS CONTEMPLATIVE PLACE
WITH REFERENCE TO ISAMU NOGUCHI'S SITED WORKS**

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**DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
AWARDED BY
CHELSEA COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN
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Abstract

Art as *Contemplative Place* with Reference to Isamu Noguchi's Sited Works

The term *contemplative place*, a new concept that forms the core of this research is defined as “space where a meaningful sense of calm can be experienced.”

Contemplative place situates itself as a category of *place*. M. Augé defines *place* as that which is “relational, historical and/or concerned with identity” (1995). For the artwork to be meaningful, it needs to be expressive and significant through its response to its physical, cultural, historical and/or social identity.

With reference to Isamu Noguchi's sited works, three projects are seen as representatively defining his career. They are *The UNESCO Garden* in France – Noguchi's early attempt at using the landscape as an art form; the *California Scenario* in the USA – a corporate park where Noguchi successfully creates a meaningful sense of *place*; and the *Domon Ken Museum of Photography* in Japan – a simple reductive approach that addresses its context on several levels.

Through the analysis and contextualisation of Noguchi's works, I begin to explore the strategic processes and principles that he used to make his works *contemplative places*. In my practice, I review and test evolving processes that incorporate the notions of *place* as well as my practice of *meditation*. Three case studies of past and current works are presented, each with a summary of analysis and a completed (or anticipated) experience. Then, through post-reflective thoughts, I begin to consolidate my own strategic processes and principles, and study how they have evolved and in some instances been influenced by Noguchi. As a final chapter, an evaluation addresses the similarities and differences between Noguchi's works and mine in achieving *contemplative place*.

The intention of this research is that the term *contemplative place* can be understood and evolve over time with future research. The strategic processes and principles used by Noguchi and those newly developed through my own practice could prove as useful examples to inspire new frontiers for creating *contemplative places* as art forms.

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My interest in contemplation stems from my meditative practice since 1997. Being of Japanese decent, an artist and a landscape architect, there is an expectation that my area of specialization must then cover contemplative gardens. This is true, but unfortunately it is often understood to be a minimalist approach of strategically placing rocks in a field of raked gravel, and this space is expected to serve as a vehicle that will bring the viewer towards some new level of enlightenment. Such preconceived notions that gardens of contemplation are akin to typical 15th century Zen gardens is, in my opinion, a limited mindset that is too narrow in its interpretation. Therefore, I am motivated to research other unique and contemporary ways through which a contemplative place can be achieved without using clichéd techniques.

Due to the above reason, I recognize the works of Isamu Noguchi as relevant because several of his sited works have a sense of contemplation without being directly translated from a Japanese garden. His work has an aura that is obscure, engaging and contemplative. What makes certain works of Noguchi relevant here is the *place-specific* nature of his sited works, and how he developed strong relationships between his works and their locational context. The testing of the contemplative nature and the *place-specificity* of Noguchi's work constitutes the basis of this research.

A search on any current research regarding contemplative environments, typically, results in spaces of specific religious worship which does not constitute the territory of this research. Obviously contemplation when related to *place* is a relatively underdeveloped area of research. However two relevant events within the last five years are noteworthy.

The first event took place when fifty various artists and art related professionals in the United States began a series of eight meetings held quarterly, from April 2001 to February 2003. Organized by Jacquelyn Baas and Mary Jane Jacob, the resulting text was titled *Awake: Art Buddhism, and the Dimensions of Consciousness*. It featured thirteen essays and twelve interviews and presentations by artists and art professionals. Their goal was to "elucidate the common ground between the creative mind, the perceiving mind, and the meditative mind." (Baas, Jacob 2004, p. 9)

Historically, in the United States, any religious or spiritual notion in the context of art has been highly suspect. Baas and Jacob admitted that "modern art criticism has been less than hospitable to aspects of the spiritual in art." (2004, p. 10) "[and that] in recent years,

religion and art have been a contentious mix.” (2004, p. 10) For this reason, the current research would not enter into the territory of any specific religion or religious practice.¹

The second event was an independent two day symposium that took place at the University of Minnesota in October 2002. It comprised of a group of notable design scholars and artists who discussed “Contemporary Landscapes of Contemplation.”² Professor Rebecca Krinke was the facilitator. Some of the noteworthy papers presented were by, amongst others, John Beardsley, Harvard Design School, Marc Treib, Professor of Architecture, University of California, Berkeley, and Rebecca Krinke, Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture, University of Minnesota. Included in these papers was an interview with artist Micheal Singer whose works are known to include several contemplative gardens and retreats.

These two events are relevant to my research insofar as one focused on the artistic aspect of meditative spaces and the other focused primarily on the landscape design of contemplative environments.

What is significant here is that John Beardsley, during his participation at the University of Minnesota symposium, defined contemplative spaces in the context of art and design as what “continue[s] to bridge the physical and the metaphysical, providing a heightened awareness of the physical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of existence.” (2005, p. 175) It is my belief that the very association of contemplation with the metaphysical and spiritual has generally made this area of scholarship highly subjective, and therefore it is through my research that I can more clearly define the relevant terms.

i. Defining Meditation, Contemplation, Place and Contemplative Place

Meditation

The tenth edition of the Oxford English Dictionary defines *meditate* as “focus one’s mind for a period of time” and *meditation* as “the action or practice of meditating.” In Rebecca Krinke’s book *Contemporary Landscapes of Contemplation* she states that meditation is “learned and practiced.” (2005, p.1) It means going beyond just pondering over one’s thoughts and implies a higher level of discipline as a consciously applied effort.

¹ Although issues of religion are not the territory of this research, references are made in certain instances to Buddhism but only where it is relevant to define aspects of *meditation*.

² Upon the completion of this conference, a book was published under the same title in 2005 edited by Rebecca Krinke.

Robert A. F. Thurman, a Columbia University professor and one of the most influential Tibetan Buddhist scholars in the West, distinguishes between two different types of meditation: one is “calming meditation” and the other is what he refers to as “insight meditation.”³

He defines *calming meditation* as “deep concentration states, culminating in a one-pointed trance, usually devoid of all sensory awareness or mental flow, though also able to entertain with great stability a fixed picture or even a full environment.”⁴ In essence, it is thought-free concentration without expectation of any long term transformation.

Insight or transforming meditation, he defines as “mindfulness insight (and) imaginatively creative visualizing meditations. They are considered most important in psychological, intellectual and spiritual development [and] are closely related to reflective states.”⁵

Both *calming* and *insight meditation*, the means by which one meditates, are by maintaining the state of *mindfulness*, which is, the ability to remain in a relaxed but alert state thereby allowing one to experience and remain in the present moment as it is.

Amalgamating the key aspects of the Oxford English Dictionary, Krinke’s and Thurman’s definition, *meditation*, for the purpose of this research, is understood to be “a practice to eliminate distractions of sensory perception and thoughts, in order for one to experience the immediate moment as it is”.

Contemplation

Again referring to the tenth edition of the Oxford English Dictionary, the word *contemplate* is defined as “to look at thoughtfully, think about profoundly and at length”. The word derives from the Latin word *contemplate*, which means to survey or observe. Rebecca Krinke provides the most extensive definition of contemplation and uses the synonym *reflect* to clarify. She states that to *reflect* “may better define contemplation for some of us, since these words intimate that the individual is engaged at a deep level with what they are viewing or considering. Rather than being mindlessly entranced, we are actively involved. We may be seeking an answer, a new insight or understanding. Contemplation indicates a deliberate attention, often implying a concentration on ideas, objects, or places that are somewhat outside our day-to-day thoughts”. (2005, p. 2)

³ Thurman [2004].

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

Her reference to deliberate attention to what is “outside our day-to-day thoughts” is a clearly defined aspect when evaluating if one had experienced a contemplative pause or moment. Drawing aspects from how meditation is defined and Krinke’s definition, I have combined the two to describe *contemplation* as “a clear, quiet, and calm state of the mind that induces insightful thoughts beyond one’s day-to-day concerns.”

Defining *Place*

Defining the ever-evolving term *place* is critical as it forms an important part of my strategic processes in creating the meaningful aspect of the experiences of contemplation. I have drawn upon notable scholars on the subject of *place* and have once again amalgamated a working definition for this research.

Marc Auge’s definition was chosen to be the core definition of *place* for this research as it is simple, direct and yet open ended enough to be flexible in its application. One of the most important aspects of his definition is that he defines *place* with reference to physical space, which is invaluable when researching sited works that will be analysed relative to the experience of space. He states that *place* is “a space, which is relational, historical and/or concerned with identity.” (Auge, 1995)

Augmenting this definition is a clarification of *place* by Cameron Cartiere in her doctorate thesis completed in 2003. Cartiere clearly articulates what constitutes *space* and how it differs from *place*. Her research findings, through a naturalistic enquiry approach, have indicated that *place* is personal and that definitions varied widely.

In her analysis of the commonalities and variations of *place* definitions, she finds:

“...one common theme has risen quickly and strongly to the forefront – relationships. Whether it is the relationship to a particular space, an event in a particular place, relationships to each other, or relationships within us: our response to place is directly related to the relationship we bring to, develop in, or derive from a particular space. Place creates a web of relationships through which we can deepen our connections to self, family, community, and the environment.” (2003, p.149)

Between Auge and Cartiere, I have amalgamated their two definitions to conclude that *place* is “a space which is relational from a historical, cultural, environmental or social

context concerning itself with identity and fosters relationships through experience over time”.

In my research on definitions of *place*, Lucy Lippard’s insights provided me with the significance of *place*. She takes the position that artists can be storytellers of the landscape unearthing history, culture or perhaps what could be its future. Her idea is that artists need to “seek out new forms buried in social energies not yet recognized as art.” (1997, p. 290)

In determining the validity or appropriateness of one’s art when it relates to its context of *place*, Lippard answers her own question of “what is enough?” as a way to determine if a *place-specific* work is successful. She states that the work needs to be:

“Specific enough to engage people on the level of their own lived experiences, to say something about the place as it is or was or could be.

Collaborative, at least from the extent of seeking information, advice and feedback from the community in which the work will be placed.

Generous and Open-Ended enough to be accessible to a wide variety of people from different classes and cultures, and to different interpretations and tastes.

Appealing enough, either visually or emotionally, to catch the eye and be memorable.

Simple and Familiar enough, at least on the surface, not to confuse or repel potential viewer-participants.

Layered, Complex and Unfamiliar enough to hold people’s attention once they’ve been attracted, to make them wonder, and to offer ever deeper experiences and references to those who hang in.

Evocative enough to make people recall related moments, places, and emotions in their own lives.

Provocative and Critical enough to make people think about issues beyond the scope of the work. To call into question superficial assumptions about the place, its history, and its use.” (1997, p.286-287)

Such questioning by Lippard together with the amalgamated definition of *place* provides useful criteria to determine the validity of Noguchi's case studies as well as self assess my own works.

Contemplative Place

Recalling the last two terms, *contemplation* as “a clear, quiet, and calm state of the mind that induces insightful thoughts beyond one's day-to-day concerns” and *place* as “space which is relational from a historical, cultural, environmental or social sense concerning itself with identity and fosters relationships through experience over time”, I have defined *contemplative place* as being “a space where a meaningful sense of calm could be experienced”. The term *meaningful* is defined as expressive and significant to its user and the relationships it fosters through its contextualizing of the work to be *place-specific*. This means it should be serious and sincere in its intentions and yet suggestive, eloquent and pregnant with expressions of its context of *place*.

I propose that in order for contemplative place to exist the following prerequisite conditions need to be fulfilled. The work must have:

An environment of relative calm - that is conducive for a normal person to have insightful thoughts beyond one's day-to-day concerns.

An identity specific to it's location - to be distinctive and specific to its context by acknowledging or responding to its historical, cultural, environmental and/or social environment, circumstance or situation.

An opportunity for the work to foster relationships over time – thereby deepening one's connection with one's self, family, friends, community and/or environment.

This definition of *contemplative place* constitutes a contribution to new knowledge and I propose in this research to apply these aspects to both the selective sited works of Noguchi as well as my own.

Making *Contemplative Places*

At this point, it is pragmatic to question if it is reasonable to expect an artist to create a meaningful sense of relative calm that is specific to a place.

I propose that it is possible and that the case studies of Noguchi, as well as my own works, will attest to the fact that *contemplative places* can be created, of which the processes and strategies used are the tools of this research.

Marc Treib, Professor of Architecture at the University of California, Berkeley, and author of *Noguchi in Paris*, 2003 was a participant in Krinke's forum on Contemporary Landscapes of Contemplation. Treib argues with the opposite point of view that one could contemplate anywhere, even in the middle of a busy traffic intersection, and that "one does not need a garden as a vehicle"⁶ to reach a state of contemplation. He states "contemplation can take place, both within *and* without us, the nature of the environment should not matter to any great degree," (2005, p. 15) He goes on to ask, "To what degree does the ability to concentrate depend on the environment, and to what degree does it lie with and within the individual? Or, perhaps a more germane question is to ask at what stage, and in what way, does a designed environment support meditation?" (2005, p.14)

Yet, in reality, most people would find it difficult, if not impossible, to have a contemplative experience if they are at a busy traffic intersection unless one were trained and practiced in meditation techniques.⁷ In many situations there are too many stimuli, excessive disruptions and/or distractions. Hence there would be a higher probability for the majority of people with lesser abilities in meditative practice, to experience contemplation within an atmosphere of relative calm as opposed to a noisy and disruptive one. This is an assumed aspect of this research.

Marc Treib continues his argument which contests my definition of *contemplative place* when I make reference to the notion of a "meaningful" sense of calm. He states "no place is created with meaning, despite any designer's intention to do so". (2005, p.15) Supporting his position, Carriere concludes that *place* is in fact very personal, dependent on individuals as well as what "we bring to, develop in, or derive from a particular space". (2003, p.149) Treib goes on to state that "the environment may serve as a stimulus, as subject, or as both, but significance ultimately derives from the interaction of people and place." (2005, p.15) and "that [since] meaning derives from the transaction between the

⁶ Referring to my telephone conversation with Marc Treib in November 2005.

⁷ See definition of *meditation* as a learned practice.

perceiver and the place, significance becomes the *by-product* of that transaction, individually produced. ⁸ (2005, p.15)

I venture to disagree with Treib. Even though significance is a “by-product of that transaction”, as an artist and a landscape architect I am of the opinion that one can design with significant meaning. I believe that there exists a limitless potential of ideas and through a set of creative processes these ideas can be tested to increase the probability for the majority of people to experience a “meaningful sense of relative calm”. The vast majority will either understand or at least feel the appropriateness of the work in terms of its relevancy to its *place*, and at the same time experience a sense of calm to the point where they could engage in the work at a level focused on insightful thoughts, other than day-to-day concerns. It is the specific testing out of this definition of *contemplative place* which is being investigated in this research and will be highlighted within the case studies of Noguchi as well as my own works.

Relative Calm and *Differential Space*

The assumption that contemplation is experienced in the context of a relative calm needs revisiting. What needs to be clarified is that the expression of the work is done in a different environment relative to its context, and in most instances this difference is in its higher level of calmness and lower level of sensory stimuli. Henri Lefebvre presupposes that differential space can only happen if abstract space is eliminated and an existing differentiation is emphasized. To quote specifically from Lefebvre, “in as much as abstract space tends towards homogeneity, towards the elimination of existing differences or peculiarities, a new space cannot be born (produced) unless it accentuates differences.” (1991, p. 52) What this ultimately translates to, in many instances of this research, is that there needs to be a state of relative calmness compared to its immediate surrounding environment. In most cases, this would mean a reductive landscape environment that reduces or minimizes sensory stimulation.

ii. The Phenomenology of Experiencing *Space* and *Place*

This research relies upon my actual experience of the works when moving through the case studies presented, either of the physical form or the model form of the works. Noguchi's completed sited works have been visited so that they are researched by experiencing. My processes of practical research and analysis of the sites and regions

⁸ Treib “*Must Landscape Mean? Approaches to Significance in Recent Landscape Design*” (2005).

are based on actual experiences. The physical scaled models of my proposed sited works are tested by simulated experiences of the spaces with a miniature camera and the final testing will be based on actual experiences when previous testing is completed. Further references, from those who have experienced Noguchi's gardens themselves, and have written articles or books about Noguchi's gardens, are sited accordingly in this thesis. Regarding my own works, I document my experiences at various stages of its development as well as post completion. Those who have visited my works have been surveyed and talked about their experiences that will be elaborated in Part 2.

As the research relies upon the experience of the works, it is appropriate that the methodologies should be of a phenomenological nature. As phenomenology is the interpretative study of human experience to determine "a rigorous description of human life as it is lived and reflected upon in all of its first-person concreteness, urgency, and ambiguity" (Pollio et al, 1997, p. 5), a number of phenomenological techniques are utilized in the various aspects of this research.

As one of the founding philosophers of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl believes that beneath the changing human experiences were transcendental structures of consciousness that were based on speculative, cerebral reflection rather than on actual human experience. However, since the emphasis and processes involved in this research are in fact based purely on the actual human experience, as it relates to the behavioural aspects of the live environment in genuine places, the phenomenological thinking of French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty seems more appropriate than Husserl's. In Merleau-Ponty's words "[phenomenology] offers an account of space, time and the world as we 'live' them. It tries to give a direct description of our experience as it is, without taking account of its psychological origin and the casual explanations which the scientist, the historian or the sociologist may be able to provide." (2004, p. vii)

In his book, *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty provides his perspective on phenomenology. He states that "Phenomenology is the study of essences, and according to it, all problems amount to finding definitions of essences" and that "phenomenology is also a philosophy which puts essences back into existence, and does not expect to arrive at an understanding of man and the world from any starting point other than that of their 'facticity.'" (2004, p. ii) As there are numerous variations on the definition of phenomenology itself, the definition by Merleau-Ponty is particularly compelling as my

research emphasizes the need to delve deeper into the analysis of experiences in order to distill, simplify and reach the essence of that experience.⁹

Edward Casey uses several references from Merleau-Ponty in his book *Earth-Mapping – Artists Reshaping Landscape*. Casey's investigation involves the mapping techniques known as unconventional cartographic earth art and how it reshapes one's view on the landscape. This synchronises with my work on perception, experience and the important role of human body with respect to the experience of space. One aspect that transposes from this is the orientation of a subject to space, and Merleau-Ponty concludes that it is the relationship with the *ground* that situates us with the world. To quote Merleau-Ponty, "This maximum sharpness of perception and action points clearly to a perceptual *ground*, a basis of my life, a general setting in which my body can co-exist with the world." (2005, p. 292)

One of Merleau-Ponty's key positions relative to phenomenology and space is that "[b]eing is synonymous with being situated. Since the perceived world is grasped only in terms of direction, we cannot dissociate being from orientated being." (1962, p. 293) This is a critical reference to *place-making* as it salutes the importance of *place* and its role in our everyday life as human beings. This in turn references the important role of art in helping one get situated, by relating and responding to the *place* and all its characters and nuances. By doing so, one can feel that one's relationship with the world starts with Merleau-Ponty's feeling of being grounded or centred.

Ultimately, Merleau-Ponty concludes where he began by reinstating that "Everything throws us back on to the organic relations between subject and space, to that gearing of the subject onto his world which is the origin of space." (1962, p. 293)

David Seamon, a phenomenological geographer and Professor of Architecture at Kansas State University, is interested particularly in why places are important for people and how architecture and environmental design can be a vehicle for *place-making*. As with a number of philosophers, his definition of phenomenology differs slightly in that he defines it as "the exploration and description of phenomena, where phenomena refer to things or experiences as human beings experience them. Any object, event, situation or experience that a person can see, hear, touch, smell, taste, feel, intuit, know, understand, or live through is a legitimate topic for phenomenological investigation."¹⁰

⁹ This is expanded upon in Part 2, My Processes.

¹⁰ Seamon [2000].

He continues with the clarification that phenomenology is not merely a compilation of descriptions, but has the aim “to use these descriptions as a ground stone from which to discover underlying commonalities that mark the essential core of the phenomenon.” Once again, there is a recognized importance, this time in Seamon’s position, that my research of *place* requires the ongoing distillation of information and experiences.

As a geographer, Seamon utilizes phenomenology for “provid[ing] a useful conceptual language for bridging the environmental designers more intuitive approach to understanding with the academic researcher’s more intellectual approach.” (2000, p. 159) In this way, phenomenology can “reconcile the difficult tensions between feeling and thinking and between firsthand lived experience and second-hand conceptual accounts of that experience.” (2000, p. 160)

For analyzing Noguchi’s three sited projects and my three sited projects in this research, I have chosen two phenomenological processes. One “seeking to be open to the phenomenon of the work” and the other “to allow it to show itself in its fullness and complexity through one’s direct involvement and understanding.” (2000, p. 169)

In order to do this, I refer to Seamon’s practice of *radical empiricism*, which differs from conventional empirical research since “understanding arises directly from the researcher’s personal sensibility and awareness rather than from the usual secondhand constructions of positivist science.”¹¹

Seamon states that *phenomenological reduction* is a process involving both phenomenological intuiting and *phenomenological disclosure*. Each of these processes requires one to be alert, attentive and focused, so that the investigation of the phenomena can be done as deeply and thoroughly as possible, thereby reaching a more complete understanding of its essence.¹² Both processes are a form of distillation that is necessary because there is typically too much information perceived in the experience of the phenomena.

Both phenomenological intuiting and phenomenological disclosure of the experience are described using first person with the hope that “deeper clarity in which the (researcher) sees the phenomenon in a fresh and fuller way.” (2000, p. 170) In each instance, it would require the researcher to enter a relaxed but alert state of concentration in order to take on information at a higher level of awareness and sensitivity, because the one that is more

¹¹ Seamon [2000].

¹² Ibid.

intuitive allows things to be taken in more subconsciously, rather than objectively. The intentions are to experience the phenomena “in as free and unprejudiced way as possible so that it can present itself and be accurately described and understood.”¹³ Seamon indicates that to be done properly, it takes considerable training and practice. The demands on the researcher are the same as those on the meditator. Both are required to be disciplined, patient, and alert with the right amount of effort and care.

Furthermore, to compare phenomenological reduction and meditation,¹⁴ one would note other obvious and direct similarities. Both require a distillation process; both involve extensive practice and discipline and both are meant to find clarity or insights. To study their comparison in detail would be a research study on its own but the premise presented later in this research is that phenomenological reduction and forms of meditation can both provide worthwhile results in the analysis of a site and the creation of works.

Seamon's *phenomenological disclosure* is understood to be the point from which the researcher sees the phenomena with more exact clarity; it is a moment of insight and a point of breakthrough. He describes it as “revelatory seeing” or “pristine encounter.”¹⁵ It is through this central means of research that one can experience moments, whereby “the phenomenon reveals something about itself in a new or fuller way.”¹⁶ Seamon summarizes that:

“[in] the end, the phenomenological enterprise is a highly personal, interpretive venture. In trying to see the phenomenon, it is very easy to see too much or too little. Looking and trying to see are very much an intuitive, spontaneous affair that involves feeling as much as thinking. In this sense, phenomenology might be described as a method to cultivate a mode of seeing that cultivates both intellectual and emotional sensibilities; with the result that understanding may be more whole and comprehensive. The rigorous application of a phenomenological perspective to the built environment entails a critical analysis of the design process to ensure that the primacy of experience is not lost to the complexities or scale of the development; to failures of communication; to the imperatives of capital development, or to the lure of geometry as an end in itself. In particular, phenomenology entails a critical distinction between lived-space and geometric

¹³ Seamon [2000].

¹⁴ See definition of *Meditation*, page 13.

¹⁵ Seamon [2000].

¹⁶ Ibid.

space, between the experience of place and the geometric simulations, which are a means to its effective transformation.”¹⁷

The phenomena, as works and studies are experienced and recorded, are the basis from which I draw my own analysis either at the time of the experience or at a later stage of post reflection. In many cases the work is revisited to allow a further analysis of a second or third experience, done optimistically and trustingly in order that a deeper understanding of the work could be sought. I will now present in the following two chapters the work of Isamu Noguchi first, followed by my own works, with the respective analysis of the phenomena of experiencing the work. The appendices include videos or pictures of the works as a reference.

¹⁷ Seamon [2000].

Part 1

Isamu Noguchi

i. Noguchi as an Artist and Landscape Designer

As a general introduction of Isamu Noguchi (1904 – 1988), it is important to note that he practiced as an artist but often ventured into the field of landscape architecture, sometimes even took full control of the surrounding environment. In the sited works used as case studies, Noguchi was the master who managed, organized and had full power over the gardens he created and not just the objects that he sculpted. Therefore with regard to positioning Noguchi's sited works in both America and Japan, it is pragmatic to approach it from the perspective of both the art world and the landscape architectural world.

a. Positioning Noguchi's Work as a Landscape Designer

For ease of reference a graphic time line tracks the chronological position of Noguchi's life and his three sited works with respect to the broader continuum of the art movements and the key personalities that influenced the landscape architectural movements since the Renaissance period. (See Image A)

During the Renaissance period, garden design was a recognized and established form of art. The pleasure gardens of the great villas of Italy and France provided the most outstanding examples of garden design during this period. Fundamentally, these gardens were made to serve man, his needs and ultimately dignified his control over nature. In Italy, gardens such as *Villa d'Este*, Tivoli, Italy built in 1550 is a classic example designed by Pirro Ligorio. In general, materials were evergreens, stone and water. As the sites were typically on hillsides that afforded a cooler climate and more spectacular views, the descending terraces and staircases created "long shapes [that] were genial to contemplative perambulation"¹⁸ (1995, p. 155) In France during the renaissance period and extending into the Mannerist and Baroque periods, André le Nôtre revolutionized French garden design through a number of design principles that involved totally controlling the environment and inducing a "dignity and enhancement of persons in movement; their scale to be larger than life, and thus to give a sense of being within an heroic landscape of the gods."¹⁹ (1995, p. 179). His most notable work reached its ultimate peak with the French formal gardens at *Vaux-le-Vicomte* and *Versailles* in France.

¹⁸ Jellicoe, G. and Jellicoe, S "The Landscape of Man: Shaping the Environment from Prehistory to the Present Day".

¹⁹ Ibid.

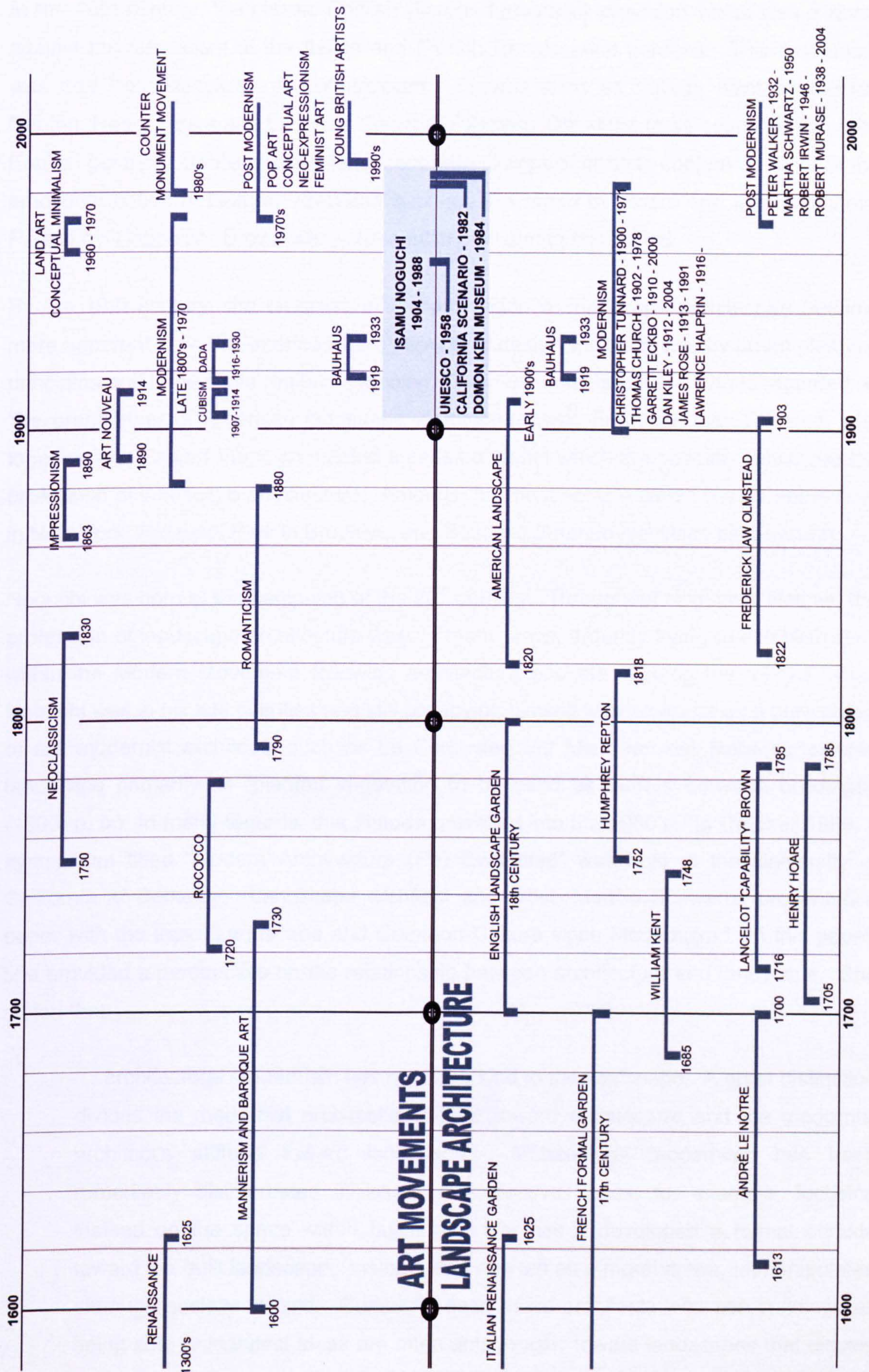


Image 1: Art/Landscape Architecture Timeline

In the 18th century, the classic English Garden Movement prevailed which was a revolt against the classicism of the Italian and French Renaissance gardens. This movement was one from classicism to romanticism. Figures such as William Kent, Humphrey Repton, Henry Hoare and Lancelot 'Capability' Brown utilized the large estate parks of the English gentry to create a rolling landscape with clumps of trees to conjure up more of the emotional notion of Nature. Gardens such as *Stourhead* by Hoare and later *Bleinheim Palace* by 'Capability' Brown were prime examples during this period.

By the 19th century, the progress of the profession of landscape architecture became more apparent in North America where aspects of design were affected by urban planning principles and large scale regional planning. The most notable person who is regarded as 'the grandfather of American landscape architecture' was Frederick Law Olmsted, who together with Calvert Vaux, completed a series of parks which dramatically influenced the profession of landscape architecture. Amongst his most notable works were *Central Park* in New York, *Prospect Park* in Brooklyn, and Boston's *Emerald Necklace* park system.

Noguchi was born at the beginning of the 20th century. Throughout Noguchi's lifetime, the profession of landscape architecture was, in many ways, ardently trying to establish itself within the Modern Movement following architecture and art. During the 1930's, when Noguchi was in his late twenties and still occupying himself with sculpture as a pure object of art, modernist architects such as Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe considered landscape primarily as "planted vegetation to be used as buffers between buildings". (1993, p. ix) In many regards, this attitude prevailed into the 1980's. In October 1989, a symposium titled "Modern Architecture (Re) Evaluated" was held at the University of California at Berkeley. Landscape architect and artist, Martha Schwartz, presented a paper with the topic "Landscape and Common Culture since Modernism." In this paper, she provided a perspective on the relationship between architecture and landscape. She stated that:

"...architectural modernism has not been kind to the landscape. A great distinction divides the modernist architect's attitude toward architecture and the modernist architect's attitude toward landscape. Architectural modernism has been remarkably disinterested in issues of collective space, for example, focusing instead on the space within buildings. Nor has it developed a formal attitude toward the built landscape. Instead, this was left as a moral arena, unmanipulated although socially utilized. Curiously, even those architects who see buildings as being able to manifest ideas are often antagonistic toward landscapes that display

visual or intellectual power. Visible landscapes, those landscapes with obvious form, are perceived as competing with buildings and too active formally. To allow the building to “read” more clearly, the content of the landscape must be drained; modernism never envisioned the landscape as manufactured space or allowed landscape to address issues of form and composition.” (1993, p. 261)

Landscape architecture, in general, lagged behind architecture by at least one generation, in terms of addressing any theoretical basis for its design. Within Europe, the Bauhaus offered no courses to its students in landscape/environmental design. This was a seriously missed portion of education. To have had landscape architecture as part of the curriculum would have ensured that the momentum of the Modernist Movement gained in architecture and the arts would have equally developed in the design of the environment. Following this oversight, any sign of modernism in landscape design within Europe hardly existed. Apart from some sporadic isolated projects by designers, such as Gabriel Guevrekian, working together with Robert Malley-Stephens, Ernst Cramer and Gustav Ammann, the general majority chose only “the over-gardened English Garden” which translated to an environment whose main focus was flowerbeds of annual, perennials and/or herbaceous plants.

In the meantime, American landscape architects, unlike their European counterparts, recognized that the design of the landscape needed a critical response to Modernism that was already taking place in architecture and the arts. The first hints of Modernism were by American practitioners, Jens Jensen and Fletcher Steele, whose work may have prompted the eventual countrywide movement of Modernism in the landscape. In the 1930's, a group of notable landscape architects came together, many of them from the Harvard Graduate School of Design. This group comprised of Garrett Eckbo, Thomas Church, Lawrence Halprin, James Rose and Dan Kiley. Their aim was to formulate a critical and theoretical development of landscape design. This was the first conscious and formal effort to break away from the Classical and Beaux-Arts influence. It reacted against the traditional influences of Le Nôtre, Brown and Olmstead, and they set about working within their own modern idioms. A majority of the Modern Movement in landscape architecture from the 1930's onward was driven by these Americans. Their collective recognition, as a major force in setting new paradigms for Modern landscape architecture, particularly for the academic, proved to be their strength.

Around the same period (in the late 1930's), Canadian-British Artist, Christopher Tunnard was one of the leading practitioners and spokesperson of Modernist garden design in

Europe. He relocated from England to Harvard University to join Walter Gropius and later went to Yale University after having published his book *Gardens in the Modern Landscape*, which addressed three principles of making a Modernist garden: the functional, the asymmetric, and the artistic. His basic position was that through function, as the fundamental consideration, it could “free landscape design from the sentimentalism and romantic nature worship to satisfy rational human needs such as ‘rest and recreation’.” (1993, p.146) His strongest advocacy was the need for Modern landscape to be inseparable from Modern architecture. This had powerful implications that reverberate today in most critical discussions within the design worlds of both architecture and landscape architecture. Tunnard’s notion of asymmetry was primarily influenced by the principles of traditional Japanese landscape design and was taken as a serious aspect of the Modernist garden during that time. Apart from the asymmetry aspect he characterized the Japanese garden as one of “extreme simplicity, colour used sparingly, subdued composition, a sense of unity with nature”. (1938, p.87) Tunnard goes on to explain how art within the Japanese culture should apply to Modern landscape by proclaiming that “the phenomenon of Japanese art most significant to modern designers should be the feeling for a spiritual quality in inanimate objects.” (1938, p.87)

From 1950 onwards, a number of publications became guiding principles for landscape architecture at that time. For example, Garrett Eckbo, in his 1950 publication *Landscape for Living*, had formulated six key requirements for the modern landscape architect, which seemed to outline a “do’s and don’ts” list. In many instances, these requirements are still applicable today. They are “denial of historical styles, concern for space and pattern, a social agenda, abandonment of the axis, plants can act as “sculpture”, and full and close integration in domestic cases of garden and house.” (2003, p. 12)

A number of other seminal books were all authored by Americans. For example, *Modern Gardens* in 1953 by architect and landscape designer Peter Shephard, and *Design with Nature* in 1969 by Ian McHarg, both had a substantial impact on the profession.

Overlapping with this period of publications, Noguchi was installing some of his most formidable sited works such as *The UNESCO Garden* (1956-1958) in Paris. There is little or no evidence to show that Noguchi was aware of or even read any of these publications on the Modern Movement of landscape architecture. Nevertheless, Noguchi did consciously choose his works to be overtly Modern and by being so it, was well received and realized within this context of the Modern Movement.

b. Positioning Noguchi within the Land Art Movement

Michael Spens, in his book *Modern Landscape* (2003), alludes to the lack of effort by landscape architects affirming their own ground with original works at that time. A void had been created by the lack of response from the landscape architecture profession to Modernism. Filling this void, the land artists were quick to instigate a new paradigm regarding the way art responded to the context of the environment. How one could and should change the way in which art and the environment were explored. Thus the Land Art Movement began in the 1960's.



Image 1A: *Sculpture to be Seen from Mars*, Isamu Noguchi, 1947;
Model in sand on board, 30.5 x 30.5 cm, (full scale actual works unrealized)
Source: Valerie Fletcher *Isamu Noguchi: Master Sculptor* Hirshhorn Smithsonian (2004)
Photo Courtesy The Noguchi Museum

In the book *Land and Environmental Art* (1998), the first photograph to appear within the first chapter is surprisingly the design work by Isamu Noguchi called *Sculpture to Be Seen from Mars*, one of his unrealized large-scale earthwork projects modelled in 1947.²⁰ It cannot go unnoticed that this is the only reference to Isamu Noguchi's work, apart from the artist's statement as an appendix at the end of the book.

²⁰ Editor Jeffery Kastner compiles a comprehensive document covering 59 artists. A survey text by Brian Wallis addresses the thoughts and opinions of 51 critics, historians, curators, philosophers and cultural theorists. There are over 250 "key works" with accompanying narratives that claims to present every significant work of the landscape art genre over a span of five decades (1947 –1997).

It raises the question why Kastner and Wallis used Noguchi's work as the first photo. Perhaps more pertinent would be the question, why they only showed a single work of Noguchi when he had completed more than 70 sited works and proposals during that period (1955-1988). With Noguchi's *Sculpture to be Seen from Mars* used as the first image implies that the authors, Kastner and Wallis, have marked the first point in time that a modern sculptor had such a large-scale idea involving the environment. It is interesting to note that this particular work done by Noguchi was only able to be appreciated and understood in its entirety from a large distance overhead (that's how the title was derived) and the image was not easily understood or revealed when experienced on the ground. Other artists' completed works following this style can only be comprehended from viewing above as well, since they were at such a large scale. Works such as Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* and Michael Heizer's *Effigy Tumuli*, sculpturing the abstract shapes of a frog, a water strider, a catfish, a turtle and a snake were only realized many years later.

Kastner and Wallis' publication was not an exception. In most books regarding sited sculpture and the land as an art form, Noguchi's work is rarely mentioned. The reason for Noguchi's lack of recognition at that time compared with other sculptors, such as Alexander Calder, could be heavily debated but does not constitute the scope of this research. What is fundamental to understand at this juncture is that Noguchi's sited works have had a marginal influence on the art world and could at best be described as undetermined at this point in history even though it has been almost two decades since his death.

Although Noguchi was always testing the boundaries of art and design, he did not align himself to the mainstream activities of the Land Art Movement and their radical departure from the way one views art and the environment. Unlike Smithson, Noguchi did not change the way people thought about art or the environment. What Noguchi did was original and although he did redefine what art versus design was on his own terms, he has not yet been fully recognized for doing so.

Where Noguchi should be placed in the history of modern sculpture remains a question. Masayo Duus explains, in her book *The Life of Isamu Noguchi: Journey without Borders*, that "the prevailing evaluation of Isamu Noguchi [is that] even though he is acknowledged as a master of the art of sculpture, he does not have a secure place in the mainstream of twentieth-century American art." (2004, p. 360)



Image 2: *Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks*, Herbert Bayer, 1982; Grass-covered earthen berms, 2.5 acres, Kent, Washington



Image 3: *Opus 40*, Harvey Fite, 1976; Bluestone 6.5 acres, New York

Noguchi's contemporaries, artists of the same generation who were working with the land as an art form, were also relatively unknown. For example, Land artist Herbert Bayer (1900-1987) completed *Earth Mound* at the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies, Aspen Colorado in 1955 and later went on to install *Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks* between 1979 and 1982; Land sculptor Harvey Fite (1903-1976) spent his artistic lifetime working on *Opus 40* in Saugerties, New York from 1939 till his death in 1976. Both artists have been rarely written about.

The younger generation of land sculptors, who were themselves determining the land and environment issues in the 1960's and 1970's have received more significant recognition as they represented a turning point in the history of sculpture. In October 1968, Robert Smithson organized an exhibition titled *Earthworks* in New York City with fourteen other artists (some of whom included Robert Morris, Nancy Holt, Michael Heizer, and Walter DeMaria). At that time, the show was considered clearly oppositional to the mainstream art business where gallery owners and curators of New York City determined whose work to be exhibited, typically motivated by commercial reasons. In many ways the exhibition was a type of political boycott demonstrated with the intention of moving the conception of art beyond the spatial confinement of the gallery. It also departed from the motivation of selling the work as many of the works were only represented with photographs and samples of the site, since it was inconceivable to bring the actual sites, which the works were dependent upon, into the gallery space. This was in itself a major rethinking in terms of what sculpture was and its relative position within the context of architecture (the gallery) and the environment (the landscape).



Image 4: *Spiral Jetty*, Robert Smithson, 1970; Rocks, earth, salt crystals, water with algae, 152.4m x 4.6m, Great Salt Lake, Utah

At the time that Robert Smithson was working on the *Spiral Jetty* in April 1970, which was considered one of the most notable land and environmental art works of that period, Noguchi had already completed the *UNESCO Gardens* twelve years earlier together with another eleven sited works and had several proposals “on the design board”.

As noticeable as the differences are between the two artists in terms of their methods of work, the aesthetics, and the processes involved, many of their interests paralleled each other in bringing meaning to their work, especially by referencing strongly to the *place* where the work was situated.

Smithson had his “own fascination .for the meanings to be found in a landscape that was understood to be geographically, historically and socially situated” (1998, p. 27), *Spiral Jetty* done in 1970 was created with specific reference to its place, as it drew upon the physical site for its manifestation and also heavily referred to the history, mythology, biology and geology of the region of Great Salt Lake, Utah. (1998, p. 27) Its spiral form relates to a mythic whirlpool at the centre of the lake and also relates to the circular formation of the salt crystals that coats the rocks. It is these aspects of the historical myths of the *place* relating back to the actual site that make Smithson’s work critical and meaningful.

Noguchi’s sited work evolved over the course of his life. In 1958 *The UNESCO Garden* in Paris was his first interpretation of a contemporary Japanese garden. His concepts of

abstracting notions of *place* in his work further developed in *California Scenario*, Costa Mesa, California, in 1982, where Noguchi specifically represented the geological and botanical aspects of four different California environments — the desert, the forest, the farmlands, and the water sources. Similar to Robert Smithson's work, there is a strong connection and relation to the *place* where the work is situated.²¹

With the exception of the *Billy Rose Sculpture Garden* in Israel, all Noguchi's realized major sited works were within the urban context of a major city. Yet, the sited works of Walter DeMaria and specifically his seminal piece titled *Lightning Field*, 1977, which is in the desert of New Mexico, is worth referencing as a counterpoint.



Image 5: *Lightning Field*, Walter DeMaria, 1977;
Stainless steel poles, 1.6 km x 1 km, New Mexico

DeMaria's work was about the vastness of space and time on a very different scale from that of Noguchi's. However, what is significant is the similarity with Noguchi's work; that is the notion that things are being staged in anticipation of an event. In the case of *Lightning Field* "the sense of waiting for a specific event heightens the viewers' sense of scale and time." (1998, p. 109) In many ways, DeMaria's work is setting a stage (metal rods) for the intervention of nature (lightning) to be captured by cameras. Its intent is simply to create an abstractness that deals with capturing a moment in time. This parallels what Noguchi was doing although through a very different method and material. Aspects of this Zen notion of the moment are embedded in Noguchi's sited works to be analysed in more detail in the following section.

²¹ *California Scenario* is analysed in more detail in Part 1 Section vi. Noguchi's Sited Works.

One of the most recognized aspects of Noguchi's sited works is noted in John Beardsley's book titled *Earthworks and Beyond* (1998) where he describes the "paradigmatic shift in the location of intention of environmental art in less than two decades results from a number of notable changes in the attitudes of artists and patrons alike. Among artists, the antagonistic posture that prevailed at the end of the 1960's has given way to a more cooperative stance." (1998, p. 127) Beardsley goes on to say that many of the former environmental artists now "desire not merely an audience for their work but a *public*, with whom they can correspond about the meaning and purpose of their art. In search of this public, many have returned to the city - and to its particular problems and possibilities." (1998, p. 127) Noguchi, as Beardsley correctly noted, was already there in the city and, as an artist, had been receiving numerous commissions for the type of work that other artists were just starting to get involved in.



Image 6: *Dark Star Park*, Nancy Holt, 1984; Granite, 2/3 acres, Virginia



Image 7: *Sun Tunnels*, Nancy Holt, 1973-76; Concrete, varied sizes (tunnels: outside Ø=372cm, inside Ø = 244cm, Utah

One such artist was Nancy Holt who, having completed *Dark Star Park* in downtown Rosslyn Virginia in 1984, eight years earlier, was working in the open landscape context of the Great Basin Desert in Utah doing *Sun Tunnels*. To position Noguchi's work, he had already completed his last sited work in America, *California Scenario* for over two years when Holt had completed her urban commission.

Others followed this trend of urban creations, in many instances corporate art statements in New York City as well as other major cities throughout America. Elyn Zimmerman created both *Marabar*, 1984 for the National Geographic Society Headquarters, Washington, D.C., and *Keystone Island*, 1989 in North Miami, Florida. Robert Irwin's *Nine Spaces/Nine Trees* was completed in 1983 in Seattle, Washington and in 1995 went on to collaborate with architect Richard Meier to do the *Central Garden* for the *J. Paul Getty*

Centre in Los Angeles.²² These are just a few of the many city gardens, parks and/or urban spaces done by artists at that time.



Image 8: *Central Garden*, Robert Irwin, 1995; metal, rocks, plants, water 12,060 sq. m., Getty Centre, Los Angeles



Image 9: *Nine Spaces/Nine Trees*, Robert Irwin, 1983; Cement planters, Plum trees blue wire-mesh fencing, 9 rooms of 660 x 660 cm, Seattle

During his lifetime, Noguchi was creating his art within the design world. He had clients commissioning him to provide landscape design services as well as his art services, often within the same contractual agreement. Many times his works bordered on landscape and architectural design and less about sculpture as he worked more closely with clients and architects than gallery owners, dealers and curators. The fact that these sited works had many other demands also put into question whether his work is a pure form of art. Functional requirements, together with budgets and deadlines had to be addressed, and in many ways the aesthetics of the work needed to be sympathetic with the architectural contexts.²³

In identifying the trend of artists entering the realms of architecture and landscape architecture, Beardsley states, "just as sculptors are trespassing on the territory of landscape architects, so are designers beginning to use the vocabulary of recent sculpture." (1998, p. 191) Noguchi was doing this forty years earlier. With such a changing opinion and the increased number of commissions involving the landscape as an art statement, favourably changed the reception of Noguchi's work as it later recognized him as being a pioneer in achieving this so much earlier than the mainstream artists and landscape architects.

²² Refer to video from DVD Disk, Appendix 01 - Robert Irwin's *Getty Centre*.

²³ It was these aspects of design that made critics believe that his work could not be properly categorized and, therefore, suspect of being more design than art within the context of the profession of landscape architecture, Noguchi's works were a highly creative art form and less about a garden that spoke of Nature.

In locating Noguchi's work in the context of landscape architecture in Japan, it is interesting to note that as artists in America were invading in the field of landscape architects in the 1980's, architects in Japan such as Kenzo Tange were making headway in the field of landscape architecture in the late 1950's after his association with Noguchi in Hiroshima for *Bridge Tsukuru*, 1952 and *Bridge Yuku*, 1952. Tange completed an administrative building for the Kagawa district in Takamatsu on the island of Shikoku, Japan.

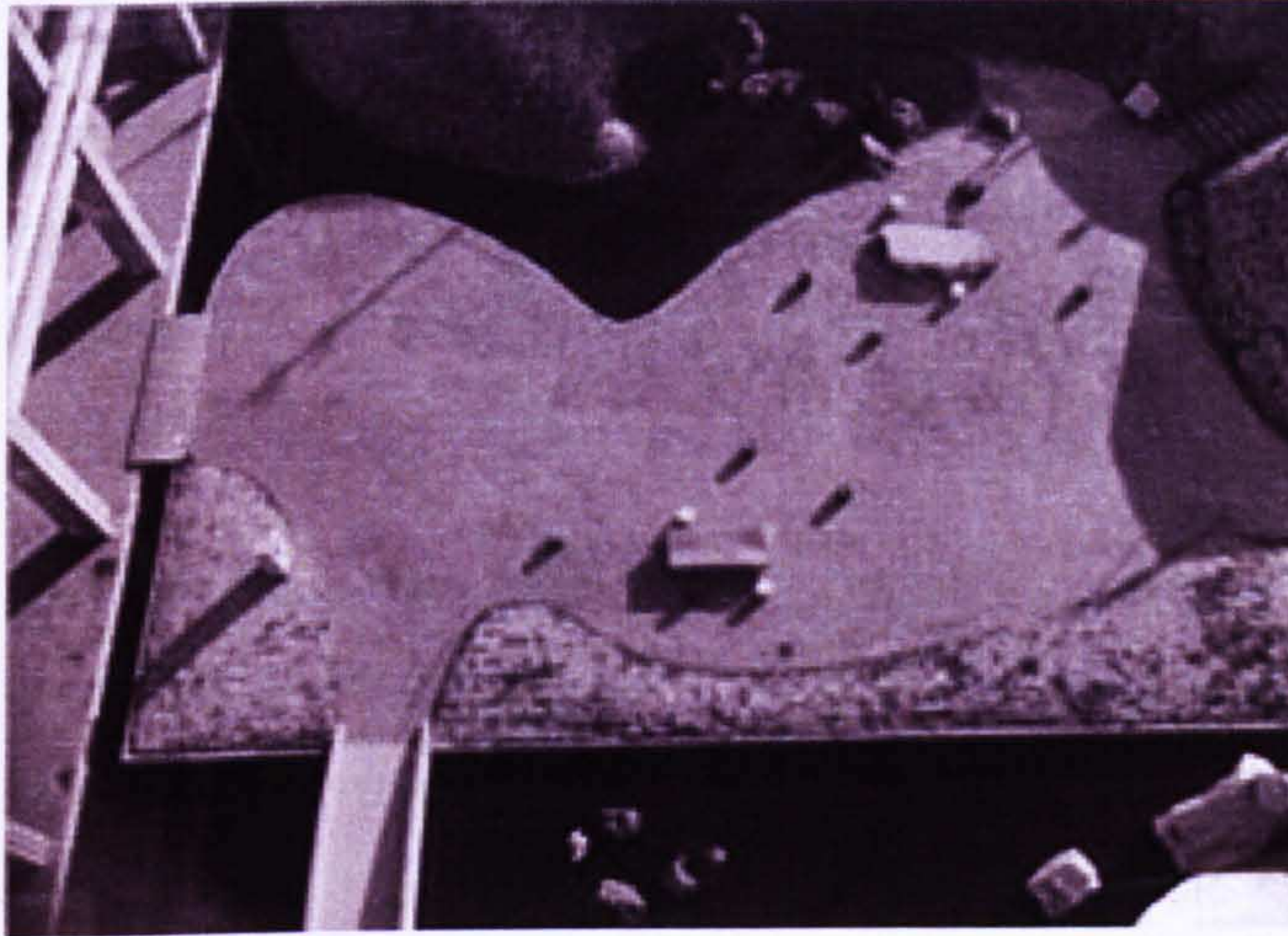


Image 10: *Kagawa Prefecture Government Office*, Kenzo Tange, 1958;
Site area: 18,182.5 sq.m., Takamatsu, Japan

The innovative aspect of Tange's architectural design is the open space he created at the ground level that is purposely set aside for public use. It is a liberating space that was unheard of at that time for a government building in Japan. The concept of the open space was designing an abstracted gravel garden with sculptural elements in stone. Within the composition are large curvilinear ornamental ponds, a stage for concerts and dance performances, and a composition of landscape elements including a bridge.

A significant aspect worth noting is that Tange finished this work within the same year as Noguchi finished his work at *The UNESCO Garden*. There are some remarkable similarities in the way they approached their respective sites — the utilization of stone as a sculptural element, gravel as the horizontal field of the garden, and the curvilinear nature of the water bodies. One could easily speculate that they may have influenced each other as they were friends as well as collaborative professionals.

Apart from Tange's notable Modern landscape design during the period of 1950 – 1980, very little has been researched and documented. Current research is being undertaken by Toshio Watanabe the founder and director of the Research Centre for Transnational

Art, Identity and Nation (TrAIN), The University of the Arts London. His findings to date confirm that “the research on the Modernist Japanese garden, in general, is not very extensive.”²⁴

Influenced by Noguchi are the works of Peter Walker, a landscape architect and academic. Collaborating with architect Arata Isozaki, Walker completed *Stone and Moss Mountain* at the *Centre for Advanced Science and Technology, Harima Science Garden City*, Hyogo Prefecture, Japan in 1993. Walker described his own work as a type of “homages to mountains” of which Beardsley notes is “a wry commentary on the hills that were levelled to build the town.” (1998, p. 191) Walker goes on to say that the work at the centre is best described as “Japanese gardens made in a scientific way, using modern technology.” (1998, p. 191) Both of these comments by Walker recall aspects that are specific to its topological and technological context of *place*.

The extent of Noguchi’s influence on the profession of landscape architecture begins to be recognized. Robert Murase, a landscape architect, was significantly influenced by Isamu Noguchi and was his personal friend. Murase met with Noguchi on several occasions at his studio with architect Kenzo Tange. In a letter dated July 1977 to Murase, Noguchi states that he was “filled with admiration for what [Murase] accomplished” (1997, p. 25) at *Myodo Kyokai*, a Buddhist temple complex in Shiga Prefecture, Japan.²⁵ It won an Honour Award from the American Society of Landscape Architects in 1980.



Image 11: *Myodo Kyokai*, Robert Murase, 1975; Rocks, plants, gravel, Shiga Prefecture, Japan



Image 12: *Stone and Moss Mountain*, Peter Walker, 1993; Stone, moss, concrete, Center for the Advanced Science and Technology, Nisui Harima, Hyogo Prefecture, Japan

²⁴ Interview conducted with Professor Toshio Watanabe at TrAIN on August 8, 2006.

²⁵ Refer to video from DVD Disk, Appendix 02 - Robert Murase's *Myodo Kyokai*.

Another landscape architect/artist who was indirectly influenced by Noguchi is Masuno Shunmyo. His work utilizes stone for a number of his projects and Masatoshi Izumi, the same stone mason Noguchi used for the installation of his sited works, is typically involved. Masuno has completed *Wave Garden* and *Canada Garden* at the Canadian Embassy in Tokyo both of which involves the extensive use of stone and has similar meditative qualities for he is not only an artist but also a monk of Zen Buddhism.

I have visited the works of many of the above-mentioned artists and landscape designers, on a number of occasions during the course of this research. Walker's work *Stone and Moss Garden*²⁶ is overtly Japanese yet contemporary in nature. The careful composition of sculptural elements within a field of gravel is similar in character and scale to that of *California Scenario* with one notable exception. Through the coordination with Isozaki, Walker was allowed to physically move his work into the building in several locations. This is a strong gesture that reinforces the tradition of Japanese gardens and architecture where there is a physically powerful relationship between the inside and outside spaces. This principle is translated physically in Walker's reinterpretation.



Image 13: *Wave Garden*, Masuno Shunmyo, 2001; granite, plants, Tokyo

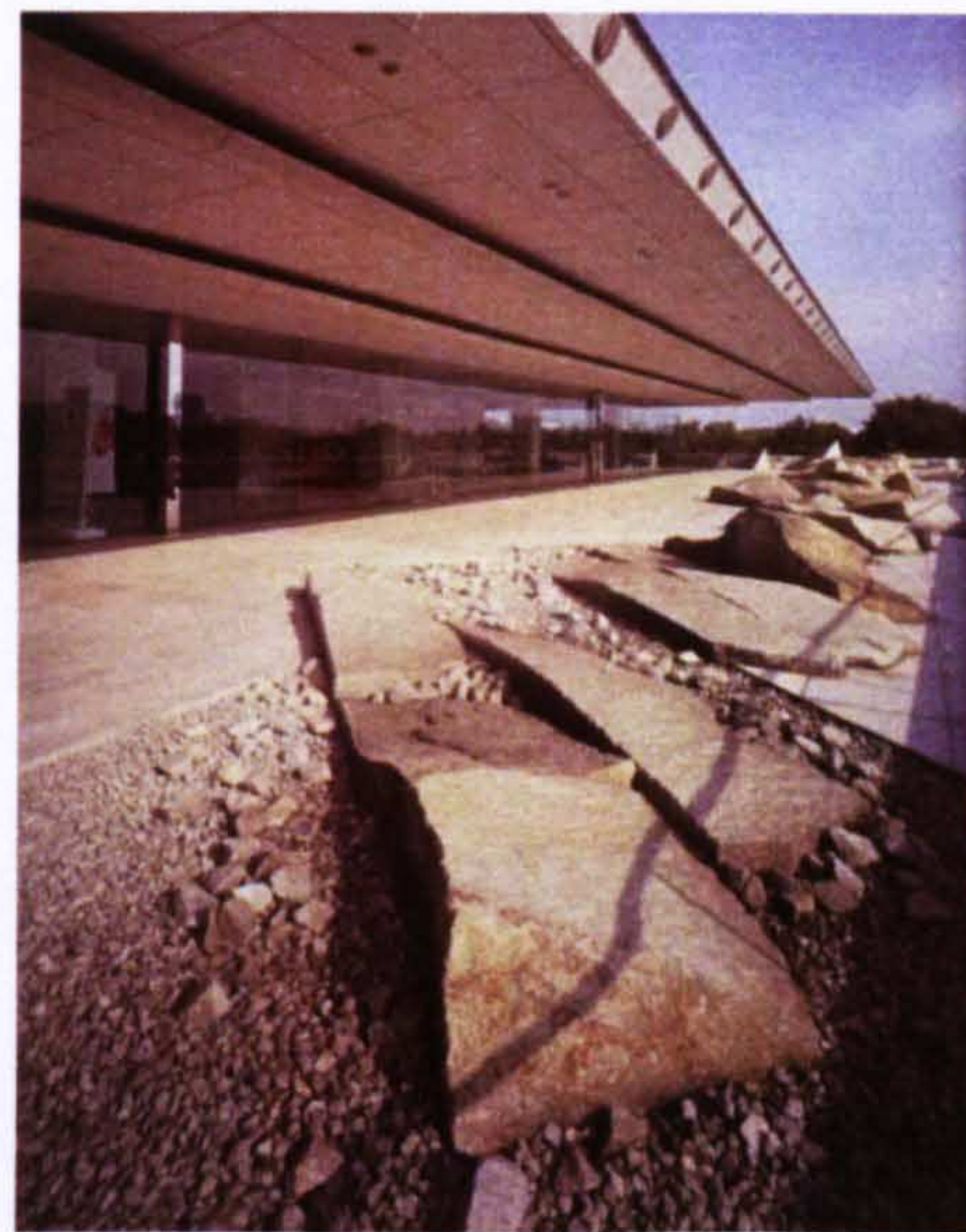


Image 14: *Canada Garden*, Masuno Shunmyo, 1991, rough stones, Canadian Embassy, Tokyo

Murase, Masuno and, to a lesser extent, Walker create a considerable amount of their works in stone, a favoured material by Noguchi. However, all three dwell more on the overall landscape design rather than the making and placing of objects. Although there is a distinct sense of craft to the stonework, the composition heavily relies on the design of the landscape elements including the plant materials to create an experience of the works

²⁶ Refer to video from DVD Disk, Appendix 03- Peter Walker's *Stone and Moss Mountain*.

rather than a mere viewing of art objects. This is a similarity I found in my own works when analyzing them in reference to that of Noguchi's which I will dwell into more in Part 2 of this thesis.

ii. Noguchi: Contemplative Space / Place

Noguchi once wrote “If sculpture is the rock, it is also the space between the rock and a man, and the communication and contemplation between.” (2003, pref. viii) Even in this quote where Noguchi refers to his sculptural objects, there are references to the phenomenon of experiencing space on a contemplative level.

In the context of this research, one could refer to the following definition as *contemplative space*: a void between an object and the viewer that induces a contemplative state of being. Several of Noguchi’s works seem to have the quality of *contemplative space* such as *The Void*, *Walking Void*, *Energy Void*, *Origin*, *The Illusion of the 5th stone* and *Ground Wind No. 1*.



Image 15A: *Energy Void*, Isamu Noguchi, 1971. Swedish Black granite; 200 x 157.4 x 57 cm; Mure, Japan



Image 15B: *Walking Void*, Isamu Noguchi, 1975. Swedish Black granite; 170.2 cm ht; Mure, Japan

Energy Void 1971 (See Image 15A) is located in Noguchi’s studio in Mure Japan. At a height of approximately 2.0 metres and sculpted in Swedish black granite, the work holds an immediate presence. Its sheer size and colour seem to emanate the energy that the title refers to and upon approaching the work one is inclined to reach and feel the cool black stone. The smoothness of the material and its rounded surfaces is an invitation to experience the work through tactile exploration. Visually, the open form centres the focus on the void and then back to the defining mass of the ring of granite. The back and forth from void to surrounding mass is a dynamic dialogue at such a scale. The mass further

reads as a three dimensional experience as its form is offset; subtly kinked and seems to want to face several directions rather than simply one, thereby avoiding the work from having a front or back. These gestures of changed posture lead one to want to explore the work by walking around it in order to experience the changing nature of the void. The experience with *Walking Void* 1975 is similar, with a more obvious sense of movement within the form and thus, a stronger sense of the need to explore the work by moving around it and viewing it from all sides. (See Image 15B)



Image 15C: *Ground Wind*, Isamu Noguchi, 1970.
Swedish Black granite; 15.8 cm ht x 119.38cm l;
Mure, Japan

Another work by Noguchi that further emphasizes this notion of inducing one to experience the work through movement is *Ground Wind* 1970 (See Image 15C). Resting on the ground, it appears to be understood at a glance and perhaps easily dismissed. What engages the viewer is its unassuming nature and the subtle changes from a flamed to a smooth polished surface. As an elongated triangular form, not all of its sides are visible from one vantage point. The way in which the finishes seems to wrap around the work, somewhat like an incomplete mobius strip, and induces the viewer to walk around the work in order to complete the experience started on one side.

These works, together with many others he created during this time, were created as objects, without a physical site in mind, in isolation to any particular physical environmental context. Only later were these pieces chosen to be installed at a specific site. As the sculptural objects were created without consideration for its context, the

objects, at best, can be referred to as a *contemplative space*, different from a *contemplative place* where the sculptural object incorporates references to its physical, cultural, historical and/or social context.

Noguchi's metaphysical views and processes reveal the evolution of his works when he refers to his art as "a dialogue between me and the primary matter of the universe. A meditation, if you will, that carries me on and on, one step after another." (1986, p. 12) This reference of a process from one moment to the next connotes a notion of the infinite journey one takes in the practice of meditation.

One of Noguchi's major sources of influence, as a young sculptor, was from his mentor Constantin Brancusi, whom Noguchi remembered fondly for constantly reminding him of the moment. Noguchi recalls of Brancusi, "One of the most important things I learned from him was the immediate value of the moment. I remember he used to say: 'Never make things as studies to be thrown away. Never think you are going to be further along than you *are* – because you're as good as you will ever be at the *moment*. That which you *do* is the thing'". (1994, p. 131) This was not Noguchi's first exposure to the notion of the moment; although his earlier notions of art and the moment were not linked to any notions of Zen at that time, it did become a leading inspiration for Noguchi in the later stage of his life.

iii. Noguchi and Zen

It is evident that Noguchi was also inspired to create *contemplative places* based on his own research on Zen meditation and gardens. Noguchi clearly understood the principles of Zen and Zen meditation; he had visited a number of Zen gardens on various occasions. Bonnie Rychlak writes in her book *Zen no Zen: Aspects of Noguchi's Sculptural Vision* "Noguchi had an intuitive understanding of the symbols and metaphors used in Zen that formed his visual vocabulary. He adapted his sculptures in later years to specific aspects of the Zen aesthetic." (2003, p. 12) Rychlak states that "Noguchi's imagination was captured" by *Ryoanji Garden* in Kyoto, (See Image 16) where he visited and in Noguchi's own words said "one has the sense of being transported into a vast void, into another dimension of reality - time ceases and one is lost in reverie. [H]ere is an immaculate universe swept clean". (2003, p. 22)

Zen Buddhist scholar Daisetz Suzuki's writings had a noticeable influence on Noguchi and his work. In Dore Ashton's book *Noguchi: East and West*, it was when Noguchi set out on his Bollingen scholarship through Japan in 1950 that he reread Suzuki's *Zen and*

Japanese Culture. (1959, p. 96) It is not clear when he first read this book but the fact that he made the concerted effort to reread the book implies the emphasis he placed on its content.



Image 16: *Ryoanji Garden*, Soami, reconstructed 1978; clay walls, raked sand, fifteen rocks; 30m x 10m, Kyoto, Japan

One such influence was the principle of *wabi-sabi*. *Wabi* is the concept that 'less is more' and utilizes a specific composition technique. Restrained primitive simplicity and economy of gesture are the essence of *wabi*. (2002, p. 18) *Sabi* is the beauty in "imperfection accompanied by antiquity or primitive uncouthness. If an object of art suggests even superficially the feeling of a historical period, there is *sabi* in it. The artistic element that goes into the constitution of *sabi* literally and poetically means 'loneliness' or 'solitude'. Aloneness in this instance is contemplation and "does not lend itself to spectacular demonstration." (1959, p. 24) In many ways Noguchi's dislike for the mainstream art world meant that he himself was living a life of *sabi* or 'solitude'.

The other key influence from Suzuki's writings is the compositional aspect of asymmetry. Although it is questionable if Noguchi was influenced by Christopher Tunnard's writing whose principles included asymmetry inspired by the Japanese culture, one could be assured that Noguchi was influenced by Tunnard's source of writing which was Daisetz Suzuki.

Suzuki compares the aspect of Japanese symmetry against Western notions of symmetry and notes "symmetry inspires a notion of grace, solemnity, and impressiveness, which is again the case with logical formalism or the piling up of abstract ideas. Western thought has symmetry intrinsically connected to the intellect and the intellectual primarily aspires to balance while the Japanese are apt to ignore it and incline strongly towards imbalance." (1959, p. 27)

Zen influences, derived and understood through the readings of Suzuki, are heavily embedded in the aesthetics of many of Noguchi's works whether as objects or as sited works. The refinement of these principles of Zen aesthetics found its pinnacle later in Noguchi's life and his work; an example is *Domon Ken Museum of Photography* in Sakata Japan which is referred to in the post reflections of my experiences.

Zen practice involves long sessions of sitting in meditation with the intention of being enlightened by emptying one's mind of illusions. Techniques taught to the Zen students are that rational thought as well as thinking itself must be minimized if not eradicated so that one can revert back to one's roots of consciousness. Noguchi was inspired by Zen but did not practice meditation.

In my opinion, Noguchi chose to view Zen on his own terms within the context of many other interests he had, especially from other religions, cultures, and mystical origins, and never subscribing to any particular one. This is consistent with the fact that Noguchi was always changing the nature of his work, never willing to be categorized as an artist with a particular style. As Bonnie Rychlak succinctly puts it with respect to Zen, "[Noguchi] never undertook any formal religious or Zen practice, even though many people assumed him in later years to be a Buddhist ascetic. He embraced no one religion and intellectually expressed an interest in many, but he was not particularly spiritual". (2002, p. 11) I would however debate Rychlak's claim that Noguchi was "not particularly spiritual." In the context of a particular religion, I would agree with her, but regarding Noguchi's own spiritual journey that was sought out through his artworks, he was very spiritual, with his own beliefs. Noguchi himself explained his views on Zen and art by stating "with Zen there is a more direct linkage to art than through other mystical forms. It is the spiritual as direct appreciation of the thing itself. It is like a reverse linkage: you can't say whether art comes from the spiritual or vice versa." (1988, p. 353)

iv. Noguchi and Place

Noguchi was making gardens as a way of locating himself. He stated "My enthusiasm for making gardens, may spring from my upbringing, in other words, from my longing for someplace where I belonged. I was born bearing the burden of two countries, and I have never ceased searching to answer where is my native place, where can I find a peaceful life, where is there a place where I can be of use." (2004, p. 393) It could be understood that Noguchi's lifetime desire to belong to and find a peaceful life had instinctively motivated him to create meaningful places of contemplation.

In his book *Art in the Encounter of Nations*, Bert Winther-Tamaki has a chapter on Noguchi with a subtitle *Changing Places, Changing Skin* which refers to Noguchi as “a maker of *places* that puts his work in a different light than does regarding him as a ‘sculptor of space’ and that he was a ‘prolific designer of places’.” (2001, p. 110)

Although I generally agree with Winther-Tamaki’s statement, I would, however, put into question the degree to which Noguchi was sensitive to the context of all his sited works. I propose that Noguchi was successful with only some of his projects in making significant places but failed at other attempts when he was insensitive to the context of the work or placed more importance on the sculptural objects than the location it was sited.

One example is the UNESCO Headquarters garden which has been criticized at length for being too overtly Japanese in detail and yet not Japanese in principle, and not sufficiently addressing the time and place of the work. Noguchi himself admitted, “I felt obligated to do a somewhat Japanese garden, a kind of homage to Japan. So it’s a Japanese garden and yet it’s not a Japanese garden. I’d like to make a contemporary garden of stones.” (1994, p. 151)

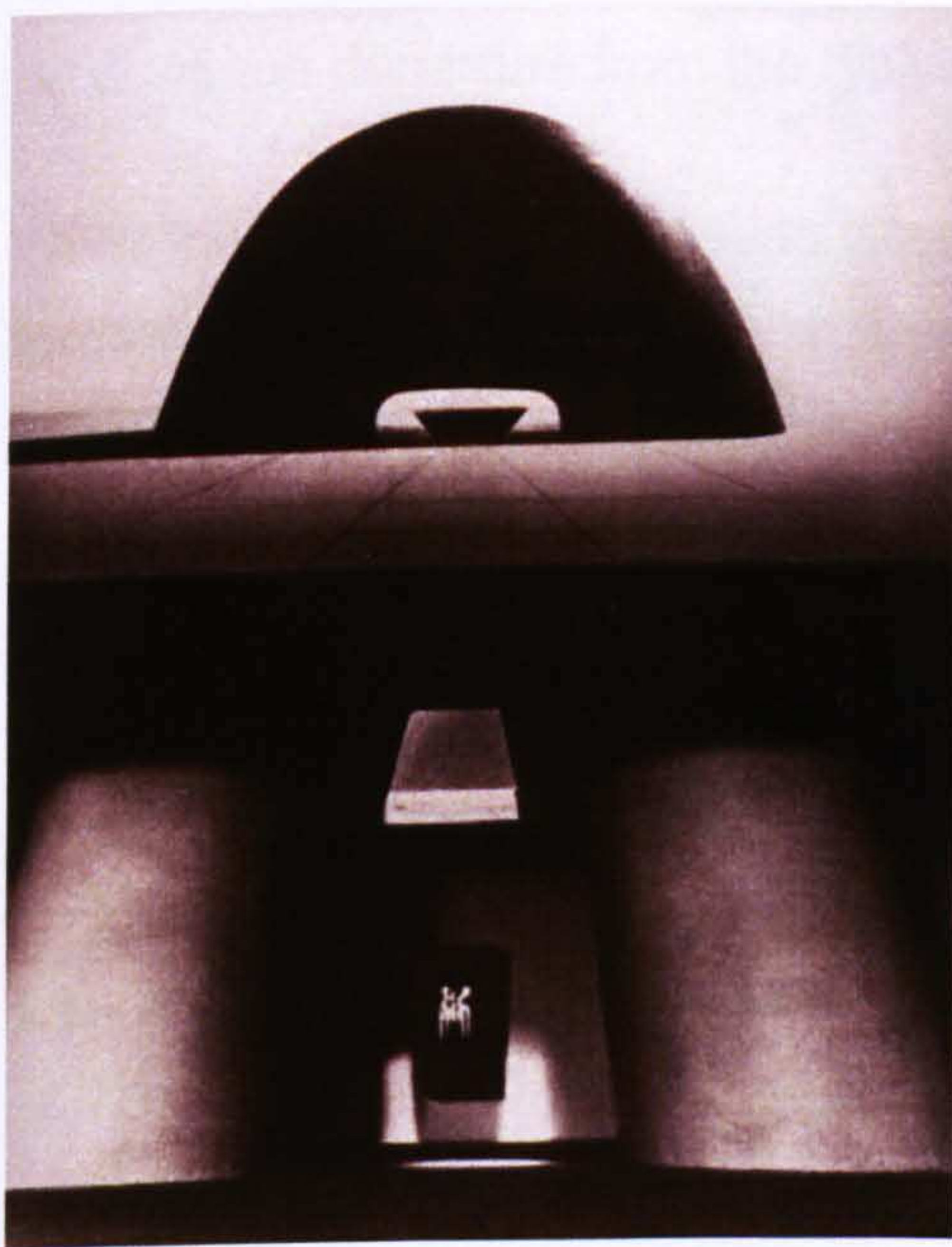


Image 17: *Hiroshima Memorial to the Dead*, Isamu Noguchi, 1952; Clay model, The Noguchi Museum, Long Island City, New York
Source: Valerie Fletcher *Isamu Noguchi: Master Sculptor* Hirshhorn Smithsonian (2004)
Photo Courtesy The Noguchi Museum

Other examples where Noguchi’s work is put into question regarding his faithfulness in keeping his work within the context of a particular place was his life long obsession with having the *Hiroshima Memorial to the Dead* realized. After failed attempts in Hiroshima

for what it was first designed and intended for, Noguchi simply renamed the work as *The World Peace Monument* and solicited its realization for several other projects. He went from one site to another, wishing to find a sponsor, yet none of them were willing to accept this work. He tried to have it installed at the United Nations Headquarters in Central Park, New York City, Long Island City, and Los Alamos, the site of the first atomic bomb test. He even went as far as Hilo, Hawaii, to approach the mayor with a proposal to build the *Hiroshima Monument* in Mauna Kea Volcano Park.

v. Noguchi and the 'Counter-Monument' Movement

Although the *Hiroshima Memorial to the Dead* was never realized, it was in many ways a prelude to the 'counter-monument' movement that evolved later in the 1980's and 1990's. There was a 'register[ed] protest or disagreement with the 'untenable prime object'²⁷ (1998, p. 207) "[invariably, the 'hero on the horse'-the plinth-bound exalted statue] ...to stage an alternative that might arouse reflection and debate, however uncomfortable or radical"²⁸. The *Hiroshima Memorial to the Dead* was a two level architectural statement that involved the experience of separate but combined spaces by the viewer to appreciate the layered symbolism of the memorial and its sense of reflection. This was considered to be a unique departure from the typical memorial statue.

What followed several decades later was a series of extraordinary works that tested new territories of contemplation versus confrontation as well as reflection and peace versus a sense of the radical and discomfort. The counter-monument movement's aim was "not to console but to provoke: not remain fixed but to change; not to be everlasting but to disappear; not to be ignored by its passers-by but to demand interaction; not to remain pristine but to invite its own violation; not accept graciously the burden of memory but to throw it back at the town's feet."²⁹ (2000, p. 8)

The Harburg Monument Against War and Fascism and for Peace 1986-1993, when erected appeared to be a typical monument. However, its uniqueness was that it 'disappeared' incrementally each year as it was buried, leaving only a plaque on the surface of the ground after the seventh year. During that period the public was encouraged to write comments on the lead surface of the monument having it eventually disappear as it was progressively lowered into the ground. It challenged the very tradition of what monuments traditionally stood for (i.e. solidity, permanence, strength, immobility,

²⁷ Michalski "Public Monuments: Art in Political Bondage 1870-1997".

²⁸ Gough [2007].

²⁹ Young "At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture".

etc) and reinforced the artists'³⁰ notion that " [i]n the long run, it is only we ourselves who can stand up against injustice."³¹

The Canadian governmental department responsible for Veterans Affairs has commissioned several memorial parks in different parts of the world in remembrance of World War 1 and further reinforced the evolution of the 'counter-monument' movement. The *Canadian Memorial* in Green Park, London and the *Vimy Memorial Park* in France are just two examples of how the memorial has become less about the monument itself and more about the experiences of the work as being memorable and meaningful. Paul Gough, Dean of the Faculty of Art, Media and Design at UWE and an authority in the iconography of commemoration and remembrance states that "[E]ach has to be experienced through the physical act of walking, and thus [to an extent] re-living the infantryman's experience... [f]ull appreciation comes through active participation. In addition, their submerged geographies and hidden narrative do require significant decoding, and thus retain much of the mystique as sites of mourning."³²

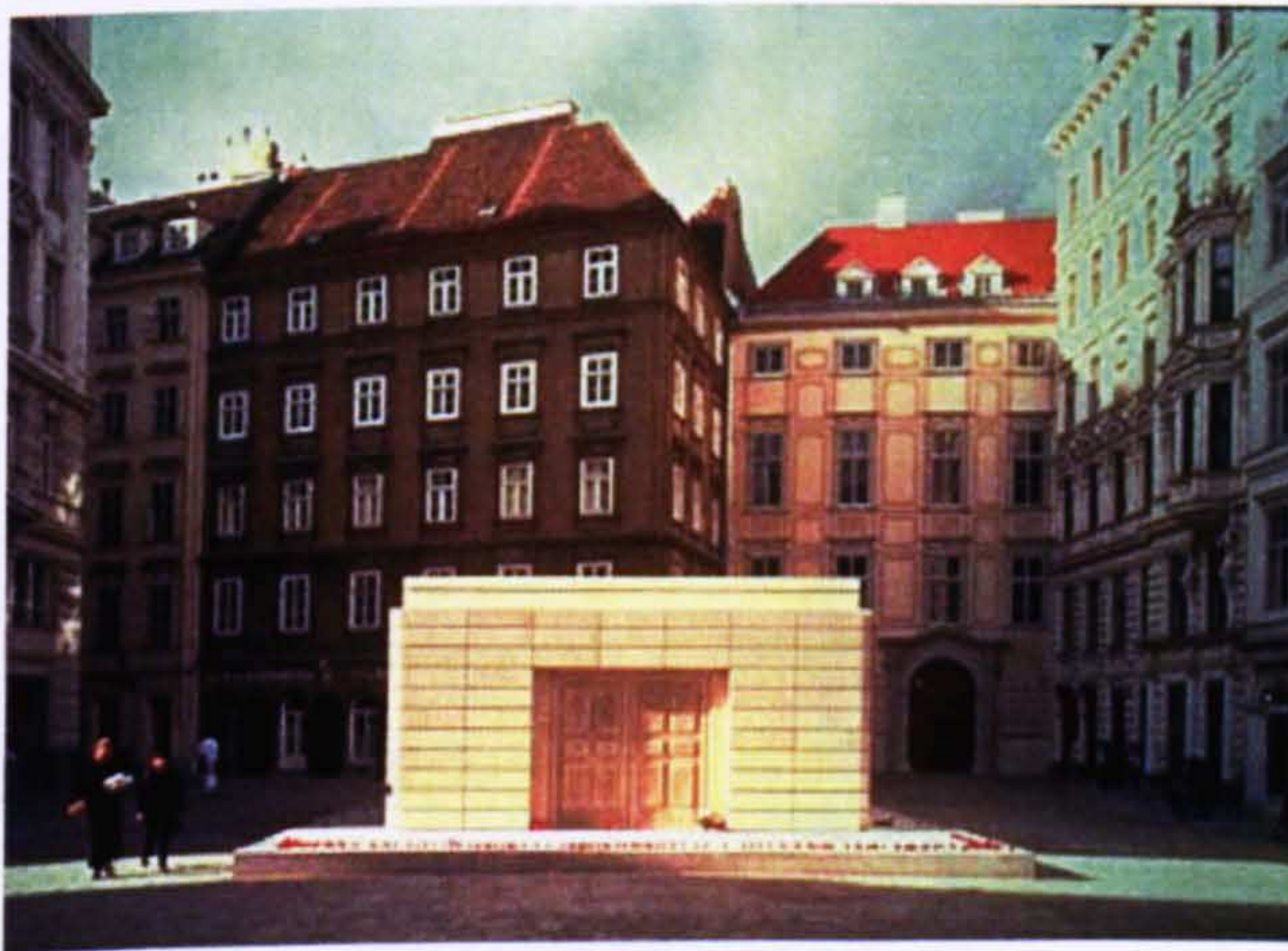


Image 18: *Holocaust Monument*, Rachel Whiteread, 2000; Cast Concrete, Judenplatz, Vienna



Image 19: *Untitled Monument*, Rachel Whiteread, 2001; Resin, Trafalgar Square, London

Also, two of Rachel Whiteread's works run counter to the traditional monument of commemoration. They both evoke an unexpected and unsettled experience. *Holocaust*

³⁰ Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz.

³¹ Gerz [n.d].

³² Gough [2007].

Monument (also known as *Nameless Library*) 2000, (See Image 18) Judenplatz, Vienna commemorates the Austrian Jews killed during World War II. In her signature form, the work is a mould of an impenetrable library of books that appear to be inside-out with the book shelves facing outwards and the bindings of the books facing inwards. References to Nazi book burnings and the larger context of the history of the Jewish people make it meaningful and memorable as a memorial.

Her other memorial work is a sculpture called *Untitled Monument*, 2001, in *Trafalgar Square*, London. (See Image 19) It is a cast crystal clear resin silhouette of the original plinth that it sits on, placed upside down. It is a simple idea with an uncomplicated form and although confrontational in its statement, Whiteread had actually intended the work to provide the viewer with a moment of quietude from the hustle and bustle of a city. She states, 'After spending some time in Trafalgar Square observing the people, traffic, pigeons, architecture, sky and fountains, I became acutely aware of the general chaos of Central London life. I decided that the most appropriate sculpture for the plinth would be to make a "pause": a quiet moment for the space.'³³ The partially translucent form reflects and refracts light differently depending on the time of day and the position of the viewer. In this sense, it may have induced a contemplative moment while one was slowing down or stopped to admire this phenomenon.

vi. Noguchi's Sited Works

Despite the general criticisms of Noguchi's seemingly lack of sensitivity and responsiveness to a specific place on certain occasions, from my point of view, he did realize some highly creative projects where there is a contemplative character with varying degrees of responsiveness to the specific site. I would like to use Noguchi's works as case studies to determine his strategies and, to a limited extent, the processes which he used to make his sited works *contemplative places*. It should be noted that although the format for presenting this research is linear, the process of developing the preceding definitions of *contemplation*, *place* and *contemplative place* involves a cyclical process. The analysis of what made Noguchi's work contemplative places then informs me of how I might redefine the terms I used in this research. In some instances it also works in reverse; in order to clearly identify what *contemplation* and *place* is and formalize my notions in writing, I revisited Noguchi's sited works to validate if my experience matched the definitions that I used in determining the notion of *contemplative place*.

³³ Whiteread [n.d.].

With reference to Isamu Noguchi's sited works I have chosen three projects which were career-defining in terms of Noguchi's dual roles as an artist and a landscape designer. Through analysis of these works by phenomenological methods, I am going to test whether the notion of *contemplative places* are addressed in these projects by Noguchi.

The three sited works of Noguchi being investigated are:

i. *The UNESCO Garden, Paris, France, 1958*

The Delegates' Terrace and Jardin Japonais, which proved to be a pivotal project where Noguchi tested his abstract Western notions within the framework of traditional Japanese concepts of garden design.

ii. *The California Scenario, Costa Mesa, California, USA, 1982*

A corporate park that advanced Noguchi's thinking in the importance of *place*.

iii. *Domon Ken Museum of Photography, Sakata, Japan, 1984*

His seminal work as an abstract memorial that represented his last and most convincing sited work as *contemplative place*.

With reference to these sited works of Isamu Noguchi, all of them possess varying degrees of *contemplative place-ness* and each of these works provides an experience of a meaningful sense of calm, unique to its situation of location and time.

This research involves the method of phenomenological reduction and intuiting. It requires experiencing each of the selected sited works of Isamu Noguchi as firsthand direct phenomena, documented by photos, video, sketches and handwritten notes. Opportunities for phenomenological disclosure occur during and after the experience of the phenomena, and are captured as notes during the experience or within a section as post reflective thoughts.

The UNESCO Garden, Paris, France



Image 20: *The Japanese Garden at The UNESCO Garden*
Isamu Noguchi; 1958; Earth, stone, water, concrete,
Grass, trees, lotuses, and bamboo; 1,700 sq.m., Paris

The rationale for including *The UNESCO Garden* in this research is that it marked the momentous beginning of Noguchi's career — working with environments — as both an artist and a landscape designer. Although it was not his first landscape project, (the first being the Reader's Digest building in Tokyo in 1951), this project proved to be a crucial testing ground for Noguchi to attempt his own Western abstractness while interpreting traditional Japanese concepts of garden design. Some conceptual aspects in the design of *The UNESCO Garden* were the beginning of Noguchi's evolutionary ideas, which further developed and strengthened in his future projects. Conversely, there were other aspects in Noguchi's conceptual approach that proved weak and/or problematic, which he clearly avoided in subsequent works. The analysis of this project provides a foundation to understand how Noguchi progressed to create some of his most critical and important works in his later years.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was founded in 1945. It is one of the over 120 system organizations managed by the United Nations. It was originally set up after the Second World War to resolve international

problems through diplomacy rather than belligerence. According to the *UNESCO Publication*, it continues to build peace on the foundation of “the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind” (2001, p. 21) and confirms its role to promote international cooperation among its 191 Member States in the fields of education, science, culture and communication.

It was decided that Paris would be the permanent UNESCO's headquarters. During the development of the building program in 1955, the committee acknowledged that both the design of the building and the inclusion of art should be significantly addressed by international designers and artists, especially considering its role in international cultural affairs.

Noguchi's involvement was initially only for the *Delegates' Terrace (Patio des Delegates)* but later expanded to the sunken garden (*Jardin Japonais*) that required a walkway from the main building to the adjacent Building III. Other sculptors were also considered for the same location, but Noguchi had first priority and chose this space. Sculptor Constantino Nivola from Italy/USA and Brazilian landscape architect Roberto Burle Marx, therefore, were assigned to other areas of the UNESCO site.

It should be noted that in the construction of the gardens, Noguchi brought from Japan two gardeners, as well as a sixteenth-generation garden designer from Kyoto by the name of Touemon Sano. Materials imported from Japan included eighty-eight tons of stone, seventy cherry tree saplings, varieties of dwarf bamboo, camellia and decorative maples.

With the basic project description covered, I would like to proceed to the documentation of the actual experience of *The UNESCO Garden*. It is a description of the actual experience, including impressions of the initial occurrence of the work, and experiences of moving through it and leaving. I then record my post reflective thoughts. Photos of the experience are provided as a reference within the text.

The Experience

Date: June 29, 2004

Season: Early Summer

Time: 11:00 am – 4:30pm

Weather: Sunny with Scattered Clouds

Temperature: 25°C

(Refer to PowerPoint Show from DVD Disk, Appendix 04 – Noguchi's *The UNESCO Garden*)

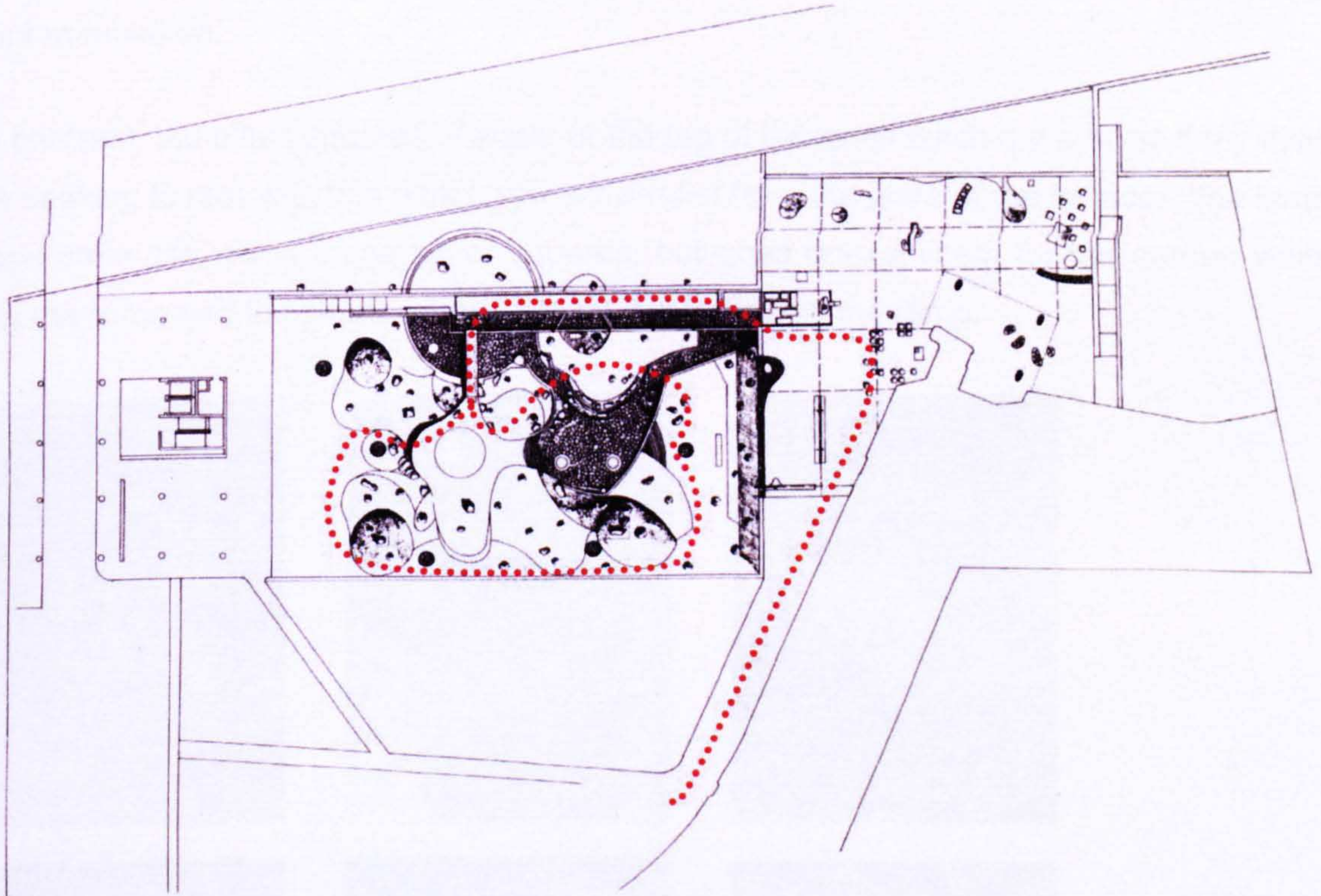


Image 21: *Jardin Japonais and Delegates' Terrace at The Japanese Garden at The UNESCO Garden*
Isamu Noguchi; 1958; Earth, stone, water, concrete, grass, trees, lotuses, and bamboo; 1,700 sq.m., Paris
Photo from: *Isamu Noguchi, A Study of Space* by Ana Maria Torres
Red dots were added by the author to indicate flow of movement

After the receptionist points in the general direction of the *Jardin Japonais*, as it is referred to at *The UNESCO Garden*, I exit through some awkwardly designed glass doors that lead to an open terrace with Alexander Calder's work sited on it. A small sign pointing to the right leads me along the edge of the building to the *Delegates' Terrace*, which is denoted with a stone faced wall and a small slot and circle to somehow signify a point of entry. It feels as if I am slipping along the façade of the building to enter this space. It feels uncomfortable leaving me to wonder if there may be a proper entrance somewhere else.

What is immediately striking to me upon entering the *Delegates' Terrace* is the starkness. There is little planting within this terrace, just stone paving with stone seats and tables, located near or under the building. The sun is approaching high noon and the office employees are just starting to appear on this summer day. There is a bright glare off the terrace with no shade except under the building. The stone seats look lost compared to the scale of the building. The space feels purely architectural and it seems that it is more a point of prospect to view the garden from above. It feels more comfortable to look at the trees and garden below than to look back at the building. I feel exposed and vulnerable. I want to move on.

By contrast, the black squares of water at the top of the ramp catch my eye, as if my eyes are seeking to rest with this dark colour as a relief from the glare of the terrace. The large stone stele sits within these water squares, but goes unexamined, for the garden waits with the ramp and the shade inviting me in. I move down the ramp.



Image 22: Noguchi's *The UNESCO Garden*. (Refer to PowerPoint Show from DVD Disk, Appendix 04)

The ramp walkway seems to attract me, naturally descending down; it feels effortless. The filtered light and shadow of the cherry trees provides a soft texture on the pavement, which is in stark contrast to the exposed feeling on the terrace. The water follows me down on one side and it trickles just loud enough to be noticed. In the background, the noise of cars passing beyond the walls feels distracting and threatens the tranquillity of

the space. I wonder if the sound of the water trickling is a bit too quiet. More water sound could alleviate some of the traffic noise. Midway down this ramp, the scale has suddenly changed dramatically from an architectural scale to a human scale, a transformation of space aided by the use of plants and water. Such scale is intimate and gives an immediate feeling of refuge as opposed to the feeling I had on the *Delegates' Terrace*. It is a gentle walk that intrigues me, as the view of the garden lying ahead is partially concealed and partially revealed.

There are people sitting on the grass areas around small rocks on one side of the ramp, eating their lunch with friends or colleagues, and some just read or think on their own. I soon realize that this is a very different behaviour from those people that are on the *Delegates' Terrace* where it is more public in nature.



Image 23: Noguchi's *The UNESCO Garden* (Refer to PowerPoint Show from DVD Disk, Appendix 04)

And as I descend, I actually find myself slowing down, perhaps to see how the garden unfolds, but it induces me to slow down to negotiate the left angle turn at the bottom of the ramp. I take care when stepping on the stones to reach the bridge. It feels like the ritual when connecting a garden with a Japanese home. I enter.

There is a strong sense of arriving when I cross the bridge with the path slowly rising to the centre terrace. There is a vertical stone structure and I am not quite sure of its purpose. It marks a spot and there are other elements on that terrace, each seemingly unrelated and out of scale with the space, almost as if they were afterthoughts in the design, but Japanese in character. I choose to ignore them, as they appear distracting.

The rising nature of this terrace makes me feel public again; as if I was waiting for something to happen, or I was meant to perform. It is an elevated stage. I have a conspicuous feeling to be there but not as obvious as the *Delegates' Terrace*.

The paving draws my attention longer than I expect. It is made of natural stone that has a level of craftsmanship that is noteworthy. It has worn well over time. I naturally move to the left, where I had seen glimpses before and where the main water body is. The slope along the small terrace seems to be "slipping" down to the water, which now appears much larger than what could be seen in glimpses before. It is perhaps due to the angle of perception, but I quickly drop my eyes down to the immediate need of negotiating additional stepping stones; these are much more precarious than the ones to enter the garden, requiring more attention to where one should step. It skirts the pond without crossing it. A gravel field waits ahead with a long stone seat. The obvious positioning of a stone bench is an invitation to sit and therefore do so. The backdrop to this seat is architectural and not intimate. The exposed feeling comes back as I sit. Regardless, I rest and contemplate the space. I hear the birds, the wind and also the traffic outside. Office windows face this sunken garden, leading to the uncomfortable feeling of being watched at times.

As I contemplate, it is then that I realize each of the forms of the garden are sculptural, independently addressed and yet dependent on each other for their overall composition. There is a definitive field of gravel where each element is set into, creating its abstractness and a feeling of a stage with defined territories and finite edges. The water seems to disappear unconvincingly under the ramp. The feeling of enclosure works with plants, earth forms and rocks, creating sufficient masses to screen its context; the illusion of nature is abstracted.

To exit, I go back along the same way. There is no loop or alternative route to exit. Perhaps, the space is too small and the perception of this space would be lost if it is completely understood. Going back, I perceive more the effect of the plants and notice less of the paving and the rocks. The ramp goes up, then, terminates at the stele, which is now more obvious upon coming up from the garden. It is a prominent phallic form, like a figure waiting for your return to the terrace. It then becomes obvious that this, in fact, is a very clever lynchpin connecting the terrace with the sunken garden. It is of natural stone which has been worked on by Noguchi with the abstracted Japanese motif, meaning "peace", inscribed on it. It is the source of the water, the same water that follows me down to the garden below. There is a massive wood log on the terrace, cut as a

bench that is also only noticeable now perhaps because of the way one approaches the object. I now clearly see it standing out with the backdrop of the building. I give the garden a final look from above and leave.

Post Reflective Thoughts

It was a peaceful experience to walk, sit and contemplate. Many of the spaces are understandably popular among the employees of UNESCO. This is due to the fact that the design is simple and flexible enough with a variety of seating and the abundance of plants in the lower garden. It is the provision of human scale spaces and the opportunity to be in contact with Nature that gives the work its immediate appeal.

Noguchi's original intention was made clear when he stated. "The real purpose of the garden may be this contemplation of the relative in space, time, and life." (1994, p. 134) What is noteworthy is that Japan donated many of the materials to France and this in itself heavily influenced Noguchi to make a garden so overtly traditional Japanese. The very notion of a Japanese garden is iconic in that it conjures up immediate notions of peace, calm, meditation and contemplation. I question whether Noguchi needed to create this work so traditionally Japanese in character.

In the book on Noguchi by Marc Treib titled *Noguchi in Paris*, he refers to *The UNESCO Garden* as marking a "pivotal point in Isamu Noguchi's evolution as an environmental artist" by "creating a garden at once contemplative and spatially provocative." (2003, p. viii) Treib continues with his description of Noguchi's work as "contemporary yet deferential in its use of rocks and certain Japanese forms." Using the term deferential in this sense is overstated. Noguchi himself admitted that "The Japanese garden is made from collaboration with nature, man's hands are hidden by time and by the many effects of nature, moss and so forth, so you are hidden. I don't want to be hidden, I want to show: therefore I am modern". (2003, p. 284)

It is not a sign of respect or even regardful of the Japanese principles of rock placement or garden design. This Western attitude does not yield, nor is it submissive, to nature but actually, confronts and subverts it. The reality was that, Noguchi's process was far from contemplative as he struggled with Eastern principles of Japanese garden design which contradicts his intention of expressing himself as a Modern artist. On one hand, there are Noguchi's abstract elements such as his stone arrangement and the lower raised terrace, which immediately disrupt the notion of a typical Japanese garden. On the other hand, there are other traditional elements and details in stone and bamboo that are overtly

Japanese in character. Noguchi's notion of having people and his work on display and being seen on an abstract stage, is in direct opposition to the Japanese principle of "hide and reveal" in garden design. It is as if one concept cancels or gets in the way of the other, and leads to the result being neither traditional nor modern.

He was under a considerable amount of pressure to prove to himself and the art world to make his statement on the UNESCO project as he was in the company of one of the most international circle of architects, landscape designers and artists ever compiled for a project of that time.

In my opinion, the notion of importing the materials and craftsmen to build a Japanese garden in the middle of any city outside Japan is physically out of context particularly from the environmental, cultural and social point of view. Even if the works are abstracted, the fact remains that there is no utilization of local materials, labours or techniques. In other words, it ignores its context and therefore is suspect when evaluated as a *place*. With everything brought from Japan, including imported rocks, the reused mill stone in the gravel, the stone basin with the bamboo, the cherry trees and dwarf bamboos, as well as the actual gardeners, one cannot help asking: is this appropriate for France? Does it fit the UNESCO agenda of multicultural involvement? Is there any significance and/or meaning in the work?

It could be argued that within the brief by UNESCO, where there was a specific interest to have diverse artists and designers from the United Nation countries,³⁴ an abstract Japanese garden could be considered at least relevant due to the fact that it brings another key multicultural facet to the composition of all the other works and designs of the UNESCO headquarters. If this were the case, however, I would bring into question if Noguchi's work were provocative and critical enough, for people to think beyond the original scope of the work, raise possible issues of the multicultural contribution the garden makes to the UNESCO context, and achieve its goals and values as in "UNESCO's home belongs to everyone". (2001, p. 7) The work lacks the layering and complexity in its design to challenge the viewer and in many ways appears too familiar as a traditional Japanese garden.

Visual and emotional appeal for the garden is apparent as it is heavily used by people. It is evident just by observation that the work fosters relationships on many different levels

³⁴ Over twenty countries were involved with the design; construction and art of the UNESCO headquarter development. The brief for the garden was to be a "place of work, relaxation and meditation, with peace as its dominant theme" (2001, p.28).

and in this sense is a very successful *place*. What I witnessed was an abundance of people appreciating the opportunity to get out of the building and enjoy the fresh air and summer sun in the garden. There were people coming from many different cultural backgrounds, utilizing almost every part of the garden and terrace. Seating was well utilized. People were eating their bag lunches together, laughing, relaxing and some flirting with each other. There were other individuals just content to be sitting under a tree, reading a book, smoking or contemplating. *Jardin Japonais* attracts people to use it, perhaps because it seems more like a natural garden with an abundance of plants as opposed to an art form with a clear message beyond the representation of Nature.

Marc Treib concurs with me³⁵ by stating, "The UNESCO work is far more a garden that comforts visitors than a sculptural environment that confronts and challenges them." (2003, preface x) Cartiere then raises the obvious question: does a sculptural environment have to confront and challenge its viewer to be "successful"?³⁶ My answer is that for the work to be critical and meaningful it needs to provoke the viewer to think beyond the preconceived notions of a garden, plaza or courtyard. The work needs to provide a quiet and subtle challenge to the viewer to raise a level of questioning that takes the thinking out of the familiar.

The *Jardin Japonais* is a *contemplative place*. The ramp down from the *Delegates' Terrace* creates a sunken garden effect that architecturally encloses the space on three sides. This sense of enclosure provides the acoustical and visual separation of the garden from the rest of the UNESCO complex to ensure that the space differentiates itself and has an environment of relative calm. The spirit of the garden although overtly Japanese could be understood as contextually relevant as it relates to the UNESCO brief and therefore in this instance can be justified as being appropriately 'out of place'. What saves its relevancy is the fact that the garden has strong Modern aspects that locate the work appropriately with the time in which it was built. So in this sense the identity of the space is specific to its location of time and place. The presence of smaller groups of people congregating and individuals being comfortable on their own testifies that an opportunity for the work to foster relationships exists; in this case it seems to be one's relationship with nature and each other. The behaviour of users sitting, relaxing and/or moving leisurely through the garden indicates comfortable intimate spaces are conducive to pausing, pondering and reflecting. There are many aspects of the design encouraging one to slow down, pause, turn, etc. and move through the garden, at one's own pace.

³⁵ Note: my post analysis was done prior to the release of Treib's book *Noguchi in Paris*.

³⁶ Question raised by Cameron Cartiere during my tutorial discussions with her in July 2005.

The *Delegates' Terrace*: The conclusion of my two different visits to experience this terrace is that it is not a *contemplative place*. The space is public. It is open and exposed to the high rise architecture, and is designed to function as a meeting space for people and delegates. When it is functioning, such as lunch time on a sunny summer day, it is not calm and does not induce a sense of relaxation or pondering. It is a space to network. Although there are seats provided, they seem to be used only when large groups of people congregate. When it is not functioning, one may argue that the space is clear, quiet and calm but then the question comes: "Is it a *relative* state of calm?" Unfortunately, the space is acoustically open to the sound of the city and traffic, and therefore at the mercy of its context rather than protected from it. Hence, it is not calm relative to its surroundings. The space also fails to be a significant *place*. It lacks the identity relative to either its context of being in Paris or its significance of being part of the UNESCO development. For example, one of the obvious sculptural elements on the terrace is various types of seats, benches and stone stools. One set of these seats is influenced by Brancusi's *Table of Silence*, Roumania, 1938. Another seat is made of an enormous wood log cut into halves, with other stone stools scattered around the plaza, none of which seem to make any reference back to its physical location or its significance for its context within the garden or Paris.



Image 24: *Table of Silence*, Constantin Brancusi, 1938; Banpotoc rock; 0.76m ht x 2.15 Ø table and 12 stools in clepsydra form; Targu Jiu, Roumania



Image 25: *Delegates' Terrace* at UNESCO Gardens, Isamu Noguchi, 1958; natural stones, concrete, Paris

The *California Scenario*, Costa Mesa, California

The significance of *California Scenario* and the rationale of including it as part of this research is that it is the most formidable of Noguchi's American sited works done with respect to *contemplative place*. This project is a culmination of Noguchi's experience, tested and refined from different projects over his lifetime. This work is also, by far, the most determined and obvious endeavour by Noguchi to make the work relevant to its site, his client, as well as the state of California where it is built.



Image 26: *California Scenario*, Isamu Noguchi and Shoji Sadao, 1980-82; stone, water, earth, plants; 1.6 acres; Costa Mesa, California

By 1981, Noguchi had completed the majority of the work that he would want to realize within his lifetime. At the age of 76, he was still very active, travelling internationally to oversee his work, visiting quarries, testing new ideas and pursuing new work. *California Scenario* was Noguchi's last completed public project in the United States. At the time of commencing *California Scenario*, it had been 22 years since he had completed *The UNESCO Garden* in Paris.

After *The UNESCO Garden*, Noguchi had created works around the world. Among the numerous projects of this period were: *The Chase Manhattan Bank Plaza*, New York City 1961-64; *Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library*, Yale University, New Haven Connecticut, 1960-64; *Billy Rose Sculpture Garden*, Israel Museum, Jerusalem 1960-

1965; the *Supreme Court Building*, Tokyo, 1974; *Soegetsu Flower Arranging School*, Tokyo 1977-78 and the *Horace E. Dodge Fountain*, *Philip A. Hart Plaza*, Detroit, 1972-79.

Although it is not the intent of this research to analyse each of these works, it is noteworthy that Noguchi brought with him the experience learned over the years from many of these projects. For *California Scenario*, the most interesting aspect was the fact that he made the work relate to its place in California even to the point of naming the work *California Scenario*. It is unknown what inspired Noguchi to pursue the representation of the different California environments (the desert, forest, farmlands, and water sources) in his work but it proved to be the main aspect that made the project critical, provocative and meaningful.

The client Henry Segerstrom was what a designer or an artist would call a “dream client”. When Segerstrom first commissioned Noguchi, he stated, “I want an artistic dictator and you are it.”³⁷ (1992, p. 274) From the very first day, Noguchi had more or less the freedom to create *carte blanche* as he pleased. Segerstrom remained respectful and supportive of Noguchi’s judgment throughout the project.

Henry Segerstrom was a descendant of a family whose primary resources came from lima bean farming in California. What started off as a fountain as requested by Segerstrom, ended up with the entire 0.65 hectare office plaza designed by Noguchi. The plaza is flanked by two blue glass office towers on the east and south side, and white blank walls concealing a multi-storey carpark structure on the north and west side.

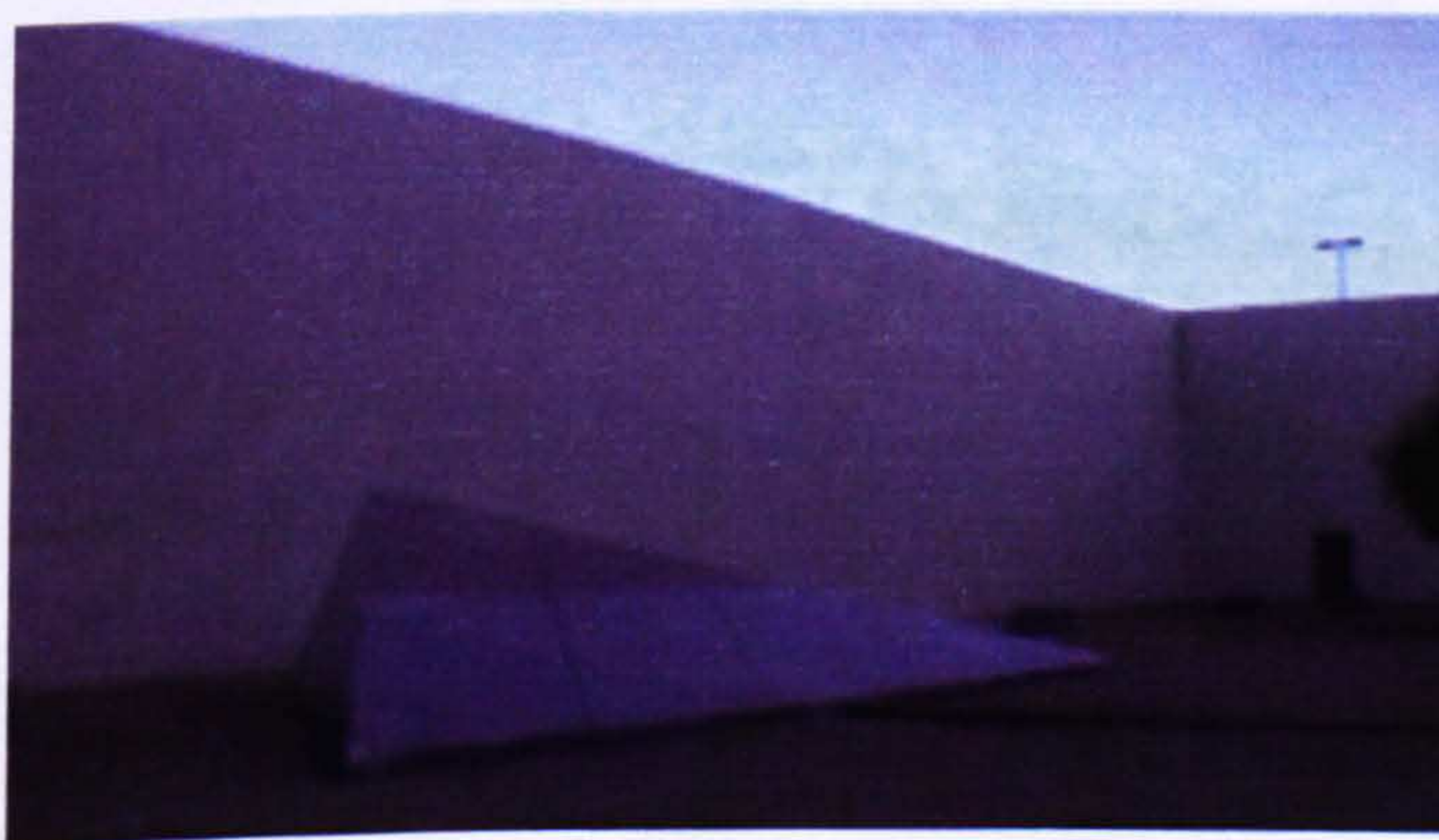


Image 27: *Water Use* at *California Scenario*, Isamu Noguchi, 1980-82; stone, water, earth, plants; Costa Mesa, California

California Scenario is a plaza court – a space that is architecturally enclosed and consists of predominantly hard surfaces as opposed to a garden that is dominated by plants. The space is paved with local sandstone unifying the elements and allowing one to walk freely.

³⁷ This statement was made by Shoji Sadao in an interview with Dore Ashton.

Unlike *The UNESCO Garden*, there is no prescribed route to be taken. The site is porous in terms of circulation and access. There are a total of seven entrances (two entrances from the surrounding carparks and five from or between the office buildings).

Having completed the basic project description, I will now continue with the written documentation of the actual experiences and then proceed to the post reflective thoughts. This particular experience was video recorded and can be viewed on DVD Disk, Appendix 06– Noguchi's *California Scenario* together with the PowerPoint show in Appendix 05– Noguchi's *California Scenario*.

The Experience

Date: June 2003 and again in July 2004

Season: Early to Mid Summer

Time: 6:30 am to 9:00 pm

Weather: Both days cloudless summer days

Temperature: 23-25°C

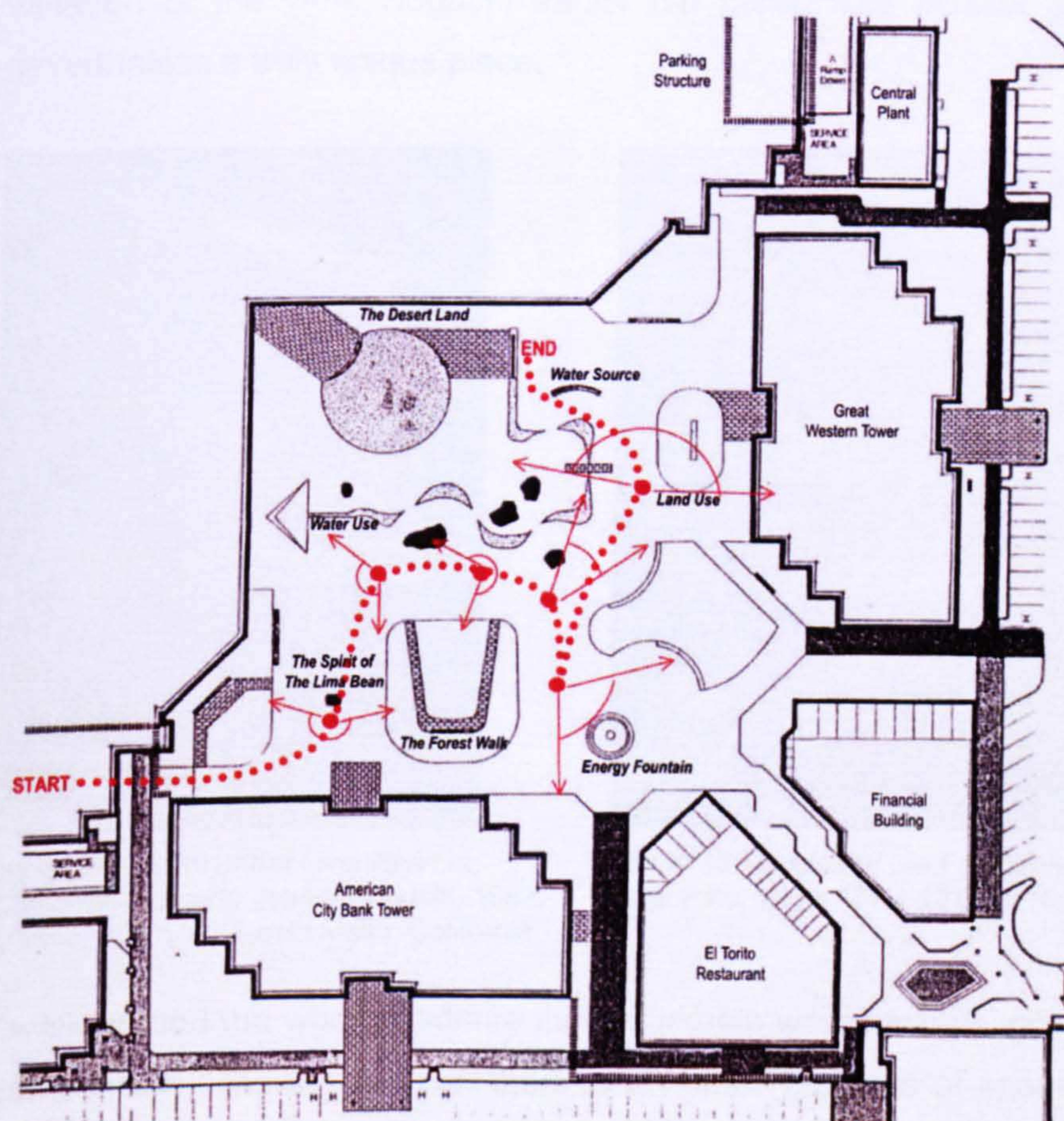


Image 28: *California Scenario* Site Plan

Source: Archive of The Isamu Noguchi Foundation, Inc, Long Island City, New York
Red dots and arrows were added by the author to indicate flow of movement

It is early in the morning, almost no one is present, the gates are open and the first patrons of the restaurants arrive for breakfast. The gate is a pivot gate that simply turned open or close. It is of a design that would still be considered contemporary based on today's standard.

Standing at the first point of entry and observing the space, I feel an immediate openness that is in scale with the buildings. The paving creates a vast feeling that fills my field of vision and acts as a unifying background. It is warm California sandstone that reflects the local desert environment. As I continue to observe, I see the groves of native eucalyptus trees which are appropriately in scale with the buildings. The reflection in the blue glass of the buildings is of the trees. As my eyes come back down to the plaza, it is then the sculpture *The Spirit of the Lima Bean* presents itself, the first of the seven elements placed in this composition that one encounters. It is a 3.7 metre tall sculpture of fitted granite boulders, named after the crop of Segerstrom's farmland. Considered as a variation of the work Noguchi earlier did called *The Illusion of the Fifth Stone*; it is nevertheless a truly unique piece.



Image 29: *Spirit of the Lima Bean* at, *California Scenario*, Isamu Noguchi, 1982; granite, 3.7 m tall, Costa Mesa, California



Image 30: *Illusion of the Fifth Stone*, Isamu Noguchi; 1970; Aji granite, 120 x 137 x 121 cm; New York

I walk around the work to admire its remarkable workmanship with its precise cutting and composition. Moving around, there is an open vastness of space that draws me in. A high triangular water trough called *Water Source* begins as a stream at the far end of the plaza and is prominent in the distance. The designed stream goes through the plaza, passes a circular desert landscape named *Desert Land*, moves around placed boulders and terminates at a pyramidal form called *Water Use*. All of these come into my

immediate view with a stark contrast set against the high white walls of the parking garage. It becomes obvious that if I am on Noguchi's stage, the blank white walls are the backdrops and I am a performer/viewer, a part of the composition of the work itself. There is an openness and freedom that I feel throughout the entire garden.

Before I step across the abstracted stream towards the composition of *Water Source*, *Water Use* and *Desert Land*, I turn around and view not the office tower, but the planting of redwood trees in front of the buildings. They enclose a space that slopes upwards, referred to by Noguchi as *The Forest Walk*. I walk up the ramp, feeling it is somewhat contrived to go up in order to go down again on the other side. There is extra warmth in colour as the morning sun shines on the redwood trees. At the highest point are benches. I sit and reflect back on what is now a very different feeling. It is intimate and natural, and has a sense of refuge and prospect at the same time. As I meditate, I can smell the redwoods, and daydreams of being in a forest come to mind. The grasses that make up this slanted forecourt are wild and natural. It is a surprise to see grasses and wildflowers, of such natural and freely growing conditions, as a tribute to California landscapes which is, otherwise, a controlled and manicured office park environment.



Image 31: *Forest Walk at California Scenario*



Image 32: *Forest Walk at California Scenario*

On the way down the ramp, I walk straight out to the open plaza to investigate the details of the stream. I slow down to appreciate the open space with heightened interest. It is disappointing to see the water being moved mechanically with jets to create the illusion of

a current and a gurgling sound. It appears deceptive and takes the credibility away from of the work. It brings into question whether this is really necessary.

The car park walls are as abstract as the rest of the work and are vital to the composition. Another landscape designer may consider those two walls a problem, solved with planting trees in front to soften the impact and scale of such large vertical planes. However Noguchi saw them as an opportunity to be a backdrop and to add drama to the space. In the evening, these walls are strongly illuminated so that people in front of them are in silhouette. (See Image 33) *Desert Land* is highly dependent on plants to be successful. The idea of a sphere is interesting as a softening element in the plaza but the work in itself seems to have the weakest effect of all seven pieces.



Image 33: *Water Use*, (Evening) at *California Scenario*, Isamu Noguchi, 1982; stone, grass, trees, concrete; Costa Mesa, California (Refer to video from DVD Disk, Appendix 8)



Image 34: *Water Source* at *California Scenario*



Image 35: *Water Source* at *California Scenario*

As I walk to *Water Source* and look up to the sky, beyond the long channel, I realize, this is the only borrowed view past the site. It seems the water is descending from the sky. The sound of running water is refreshing as it reaches the bottom and engages with the plaza. The stream then weaves and meanders, and encourages one to cross over it by

jumping, wading or using the bridge. It is meant to be crossed over by, as it intervenes the plaza.

I wander down along the stream, perhaps to understand it but it seems natural to go close to the edge of the river and enjoy it. The river is the plaza broken open to reveal gravel and the water that has collected in this crevice. The river edge is of remarkable workmanship, a creation in itself with its stone thickness changing from 75mm to almost 300mm as it reaches *Water Use*, an abstract pyramidal container to receive this water. Returning along the river edge back towards the centre, I approach Noguchi's *Land Use*, which, in many ways looks like a receptacle for land as opposed to water and is, therefore, an accumulation of earth turned into what appears almost as a memorial. Its horizontal posture in front of the entrance of the office tower, leads me to believe that it is sited there to block the view of the office and forces me to go around it to enter the building – a technique found in both Japanese and Chinese gardens.

Being able to move freely within a plaza, without a specific walkway, means that it is up to my own will to go anywhere I please. Eventually, I find myself in a circular space that has the *Energy Fountain* as its focal point. Of all the various works, this one is startlingly high tech in its form, function, scale and materials regardless of the fact that it was completed in 1980. It is like a turbine with a water effect that expels energy to its viewer. Its form is simple and familiar, and yet the water effect is quite unique. Its proximity to the two office towers means that diners in the surrounding restaurants have glimpses of the fountain through the vegetation that separates it. Surrounding this space is a planting bed edged with circular seating. Throughout the day, it is popular for people to sit along the plants, view *Energy Fountain* from a distance, and watch the performance of the water.



Image 36: *Energy Fountain* at *California Scenario*

From there, I continue to wander, this time skirting the outside of the different works and approaching them from behind. A different route is possible because this field of paving seems to continue everywhere in every direction. I can, thereby, see each of the works again from behind, almost as if seeing things from a backstage perspective. I then leave through the entrance between the two office towers.

Post Reflective Thoughts

Compared to *The UNESCO Garden*, *California Scenario* is a more public and theatrical place in its character and public use. It is less about individual contemplation and retreat, and addresses an experience that is more about seeing people as part of the work. Taking the fact that one is in a California business park into context, the culture is such that there seems to be a social appropriateness for being in an open sculptural plaza as opposed to a planted Japanese inspired garden, like *The UNESCO Garden* in Paris.

Dore Ashton observed that since the completion of *The UNESCO Garden*, Noguchi “never again returned to such overtly Japanese forms. Nor did he ever create a garden that featured vegetation equal in measure to stone and other hard materials.” (2003, p. 128) These words proved true in *California Scenario*. Although there are strong influences from a Japanese stroll garden in its experience, it is not overtly Japanese. His strategy of using plants is also much more carefully planned although not entirely successful. Until that time, it was obvious that Noguchi avoided using plants on his projects in order not to repeat his past struggles with *The UNESCO Garden*. He knew that if they were not used properly they would ultimately compete, through their very nature, with the abstractness that he was trying to achieve with his stonework and other elements in the composition.

In *California Scenario*, the use of plants is different in two aspects. Firstly, it was completed with the assistance of an experienced landscape architect³⁸ from California who knew the horticultural aspects of the plants, their suitability for the California climate and the specific site conditions. Secondly, Noguchi used the plants as sculptural forms rather than the way one would expect to see how they naturally grow in their respective habitats. By doing so, he was not confusing the viewer by the impression that this was a representation of Nature but instead used natural elements for the purposes of fulfilling his overall agenda of reinterpreting the environments of California. Having learnt his lesson at *The UNESCO Garden*, Noguchi’s use of plants is controlled to the point of being

³⁸ Ken Kammeyer.

restrained, never exceeding that critical point where the plant elements might diminish the effect and experience of his other sculptural elements.



Image 37: *Water Use* at *California Scenario*, Isamu Noguchi, 1982; stone, grass, trees, concrete; Costa Mesa, California

During the times that I visited *California Scenario*, it cannot go unnoticed that it is very well patronized. On both visits, I witnessed various uses of the *place*. The most prevalent use was the office employees having lunch and breaks, to escape from their buildings when it was pleasant weather. A birthday party had children running with balloons through the river and playing on top of the pyramidal form of *Water Use*. The children animated the place like performers in an amateur Martha Graham performance, which I assume Noguchi would have loved to see. A company cocktail reception was organized on the terrace near the restaurants. Some elderly people, possibly tourists, were wandering and wondering as they explored Noguchi's works. Teens in their mischievous ways were trying to climb the inside trough of *Water Source* and actually getting up dangerously high. There were several couples chatting. A large percentage of the people strolled at a relaxed pace while talking, sitting and enjoying each other's company and the outdoor environment. As a trait of a successful place this work fosters relationships.

During one of my visits, I met with Bert Winther-Tamaki, an associate professor at the University of California who has written two books on Noguchi and his works.³⁹ He has been to *California Scenario* a countless number of times over the years. He commented to me while we walked through the plaza together that even with the numerous visits that he has made to study it, enjoy it or relaxes in it; he still sees something that he hasn't seen before on each new visit he makes. Perhaps, it is the change of season and its

³⁹ Bert Winther-Tamaki authored *Art in the Encounter of Nations: Japanese and American Artists in the Early Postwar Years* and co-authored *Isamu Noguchi and Modern Japanese Ceramics: A Close Embrace of the Earth* with Louise Allison Cort.

effect on the plants, a detail of a seat, or a stone paving that changed colour because of the time of day. He also mentioned that there have been occasions when he has witnessed performances by professional dance groups, and that they used it like an abstract stage similar to the way Noguchi was inspired when doing the stage set designs for the Modern dance choreographer, Martha Graham. Winther-Tamaki's experience strongly suggests that the work is layered, complex and unfamiliar enough to hold people's attention even during several visits over several years. This is a commendable quality towards making it a successful *place*.

There is an aesthetic clarity about *California Scenario*, part of which is accounted for by a ground plane covered by California sandstone and is in essence the palette for Noguchi's works to be staged. This one unifying element then allows for the sculptural, landscape and architectural elements to penetrate through as if to emerge out from below and coming above this field of sandstone. The similarity with Zen aesthetics and specifically *Ryoanji Garden* in Kyoto comes to mind. The white walls that form a backdrop to the plaza and provide the spatial clarity are similar to the earthen wall that encloses Ryoanji but at a much larger scale. As a trait of a successful *contemplative place* these walls create an environment of relative calm.

The concept of *California Scenario*, representing the different geographical regions of the State of California, makes it a powerful *place-specific* work. Reflecting back now it is the experience that is more powerfully remembered than the objects. The smell of the redwoods while walking in *Forest Walk* and the crossing of the stream that moves through the work thereby engages the viewer at a different level. The other works of *California Scenario* such as *The Spirit of the Lima Bean*, *Energy Fountain*, and *Desert Land* were just sculptural objects placed that one can move around and were less impressive to me.

The prevailing spirit of calm in *California Scenario* seems to stem from both the nature of the sculptures and the generous pauses of paved open space, seating and landscape between the works. Noguchi was obviously testing out a new balance among architectural enclosure, landscape environment and sculptural elements to make the overall place a memorable and meaningful experience to the user.

As a post-reflective thought, *California Scenario* is visually and emotionally appealing. One leaves with a wonder that there is more to the work than what is actually first seen and understood. I personally left having taken a deeper reference to California as a place and feel compelled to return to experience its contemplative and memorable qualities again.

Domon Ken Museum of Photography, Sakata, Japan

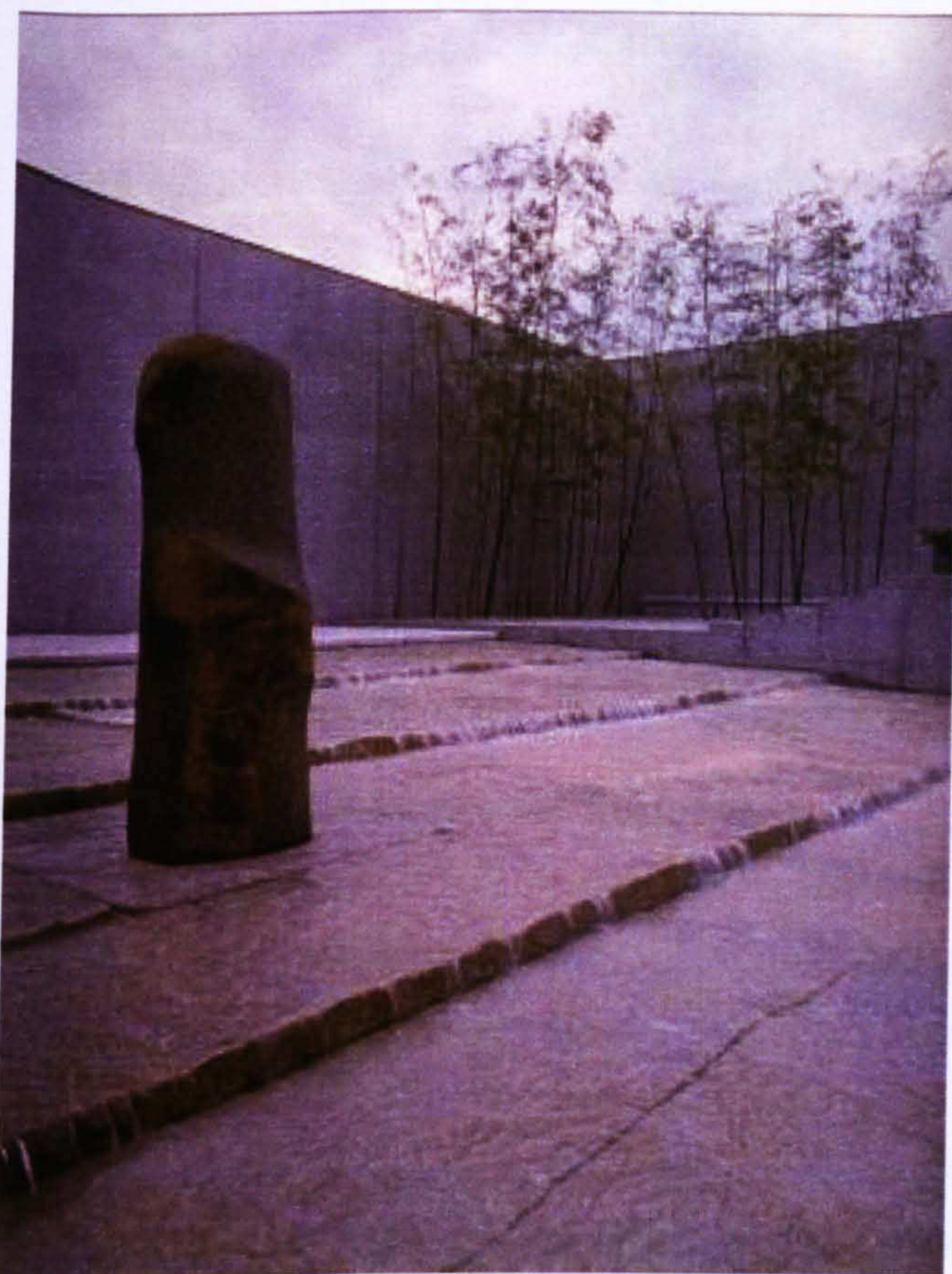


Image 38: *Domon Ken Museum of Photography*, 1984,
Sakata, Japan
Photo: Michio Noguchi

One of Noguchi's most successful architectural collaborations came late in his career with Yoshio Taniguchi. Noguchi knew young Taniguchi from the working relationship with his father Yoshiro Taniguchi who was also an architect. Noguchi had collaborated with Yoshiro on a garden and memorial room, *Shin Banraishi* (New Building of Welcome) for Keio University, Tokyo back in 1952. Customary in Japan, the respect for one's elders meant that the young Yoshio Taniguchi would considerably give Noguchi more liberty to make recommendations or modify the architecture as he considered appropriate.

The project was a memorial museum dedicated to Ken Domon, a renowned photographer whose native city was Sakata, Japan. When Domon passed away, he donated his remaining collections to the city, which in turn commissioned Yoshio Taniguchi to design a museum for displaying and storing his photographic works. The site is part of a park that is four kilometres from the city and surrounded by rice fields, forests and distant views of the mountains. An artificial pond is at the terminus of the promenade that one can walk along to enter the museum. Noguchi's involvement is within a courtyard, around which

the architecture encloses it on three sides with the fourth side an open frame that extends the view and space to the pond. The architecture faces due west in the direction of the Japan Sea, which is within a few kilometres of the museum but not visible.

During Noguchi's collaboration with Taniguchi, one of the strongest elements was their use of the *tokonoma* concept of space utilization, a traditional Japanese way of using small spaces as a type of display alcove. Dore Ashton makes the analogy of the recessed courtyard of *Domon Ken Museum* being a *tokonoma*. Although she does not fully explain this analogy, I assume that she refers to the experience of the museum as seen from the outside, across the pond, looking back to the elevation of the building, where the recess of the courtyard is viewed from one point to see the basalt stone figure as a sculptural element.

She continues by referring to this element of traditional architecture as something that Noguchi romanticized about in his early studies of Japanese culture. He stated that the *tokonoma* "Looked at superficially might be called wasted space, but actually it gives a far greater sense of space than it consumes. In a way, it might be called a reflection indoors of the garden, a window as it was there is an unused space involved, a void which invites the imagination into communion with a mood..." (1992, p. 280) The strong reference of the work, being culturally relevant to its context in Japan, further reinforces the significance of the work as a meaningful *place*.



Image 39: *Tokonoma*, Muromachi period (14th-16th century), Japan



Image 40: *Tokonoma*, Domon Ken Museum of Photography, Sakata, Japan
Source: Riley T. 2005, *Yoshio Taniguchi: Nine Museums*, New York: The Museum of Modern Art.

Domon Ken Museum of Photography, completed in 1984, was Noguchi's last major sited works. At the age of eighty, he had reached the height of his career as a competent and established designer and artist of contemplative places.

Having completed the basic project description I will now continue with the written documentation of the actual experiences of *Domon Ken Museum of Photography* followed by my post reflective thoughts. This particular experience was video recorded and documented. Please refer to video from DVD Disk, Appendix 08- Noguchi's *Domon Ken Museum of Photography* together with the PowerPoint Show in Appendix 07- Noguchi's *Domon Ken Museum of Photography*.

The Experience

Date: June 03, 2004

Time: 9:30am – 4:00pm

Season: Early Summer

Weather: Overcast with light rain,

Temperature: 19 °C

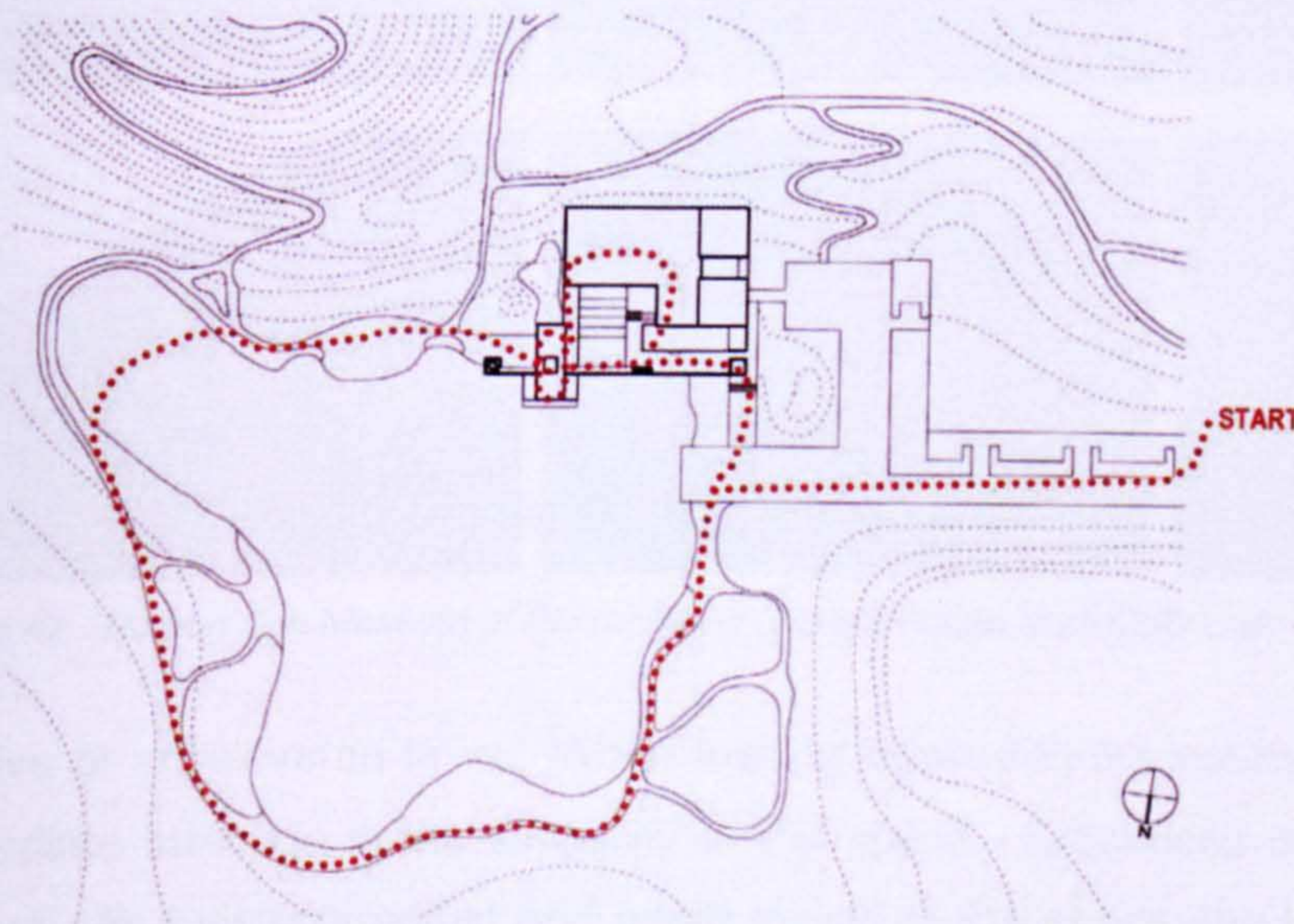


Image 41: Illustrative Map of *Domon Ken Museum of Photography*
Source: Terence Riley, *Yoshio Tanaguchi: Nine Museums* (2004)
Red dots were added in the author to indicate flow of movement.

The experience starts from the public promenade that extends north towards the pond next to the river. It is a shaded walk that seems, from a distance, to lead simply to the open space of the water and the mountains beyond. Without any indication of the museum's whereabouts, I continue to walk nevertheless. It is not until I am considerably down this walk that I catch a glimpse of what appears to be the museum with a discrete arrival point on the right side.

Turning to the right, now I see the relationship of the building with its environment. It is recessed into a small hill and overhanging the water, almost as if it is posed, holding its place between the hill and the water. Approaching the building, I face the end of the building elevation. A simple suggestion to move to the left is achieved by a corridor, which takes me through the façade but not into the building. It is as if I am slipping parallel with the facade to go past what is identified as the reception and arriving at an open-air courtyard that signifies my arrival into Noguchi's work. Confusion sets in as to exactly where I am located relative to the rest of the museum and after orienting myself, I am surprised to see that I am at the centre of the museum — a water court which is open to the sky. In fact, I have not yet formally entered the building.



Image 42: *Domon Ken Museum of Photography* (Refer to video from DVD Disk, Appendix 08)

I arrive at an elevated level. When looking down into the courtyard, what comes to my immediate attention is the simplicity of the space. Emptiness is felt, as if something is absent. As I visually adjust and orient myself to the space, the layers of other elements become noticeable, like layers uncovered with time. The ground surface of the courtyard is a series of four water terraces that cascade down into the pond that I have seen from the outside. The isolated basalt stone stands erect as if waiting and the bamboo grove with a stone seat are positioned in the corner. After contemplating on a seat within the bamboo, I realize that the architectural facades facing the space are carefully orchestrated. It is designed with a level of care and uniqueness for one to take special notice. The columns and windows are placed as if with a rhythm of its own.

I then enter the water courtyard, pass the bamboo and walk along the edge of the building, skirting the space like walking the outer sides of a cloister. The stele of basalt stone positioned in the water is off-centre and not accessible. The stone is physically isolated within the composition, with the water surrounding it. The intentional distance from the viewer to the stone looks as if it is done out of respect for the photographer. The work itself is untouchable, as Ken Domon is, now, not physically present. The basalt stone looks partially chiselled but is not seen from all sides, intriguing me to investigate the piece further from the other sides. Yet, I have to wait in order to see it from another angle, probably from within the building on the opposite side.

To understand the space further would require walking onto the upper stone terrace but I am not clear whether it is allowed. It is as if the space itself seems to demand decorum of one's behaviour. I feel a bit hesitant that someone may ask me to leave but step onto the terrace anyway. I feel exposed as if I am the isolated stone in the middle of the water. I sense it as Noguchi's stage and if I want to sit and contemplate, I would need to retreat back where I was behind the bamboo planting.

The upper terrace where I am standing is the same granite stone as the water terraces except the water terraces are discoloured from the water and seem to match the oxidization of the basalt skin of the stele. It is as if the water should have originated at this upper level but decided instead to begin one level below, perhaps to allow one to wander around, see the perspective of the basalt stone and feel the effect of *shakkei* or "borrowed scenery" by looking beyond the pond through the framed *tokonoma* of the architecture.

I return to the bamboo and have a seat on the stone bench again quietly taking in the experience of the space, but my mind wanders as I have a filtered perspective through the bamboo to the space beyond. It is far more mystifying and I thought that if Ken Domon were alive, he would probably prefer to take a picture from this seat through the bamboo rather than from anywhere else. I hear the peaceful sound of the continuous water falling, a child's laughter playing with the koi in the pond outside, the sound of seagulls reminding me of how close I am to the sea. There is no sunshine and therefore no shadows, just flatness to everything. I can see the soundless movement of people going through the opposite corridor. It is with ease that I sit, keep still and reflect.

I enter the building and proceed down into the main exhibition hall. It is a completely artificially lit space with no windows in order to protect the photography from potential ultra violet ray damage caused by the natural light. It seems like a cave sunken into the hill

and it is the spatial counterpoint to the open courtyard; thereby having one of light and the other of darkness create a direct analogy of the photographic aspects of space.



Image 43: *Domon Ken Museum of Photography* (Refer to video from DVD Disk, Appendix 08)

Moving from this hall there is a corridor that leads back to the courtyard. This time I walk from the opposite side that slowly steps/ramps down with vertical windows, whose apertures of opening are analogous to photographic apertures, changing from narrow to wide as one approaches the open view of the pond beyond. I arrive in a lounge at the end and I can sense being over the water. It is open and light with a full view from the pond to the garden beyond. A final gallery backs onto this space extends to another garden that has the hill as a backdrop, not designed by Noguchi. I end up at the lounge to rest on a chair, and reflect this time over the pond and mountains beyond - an outward focus as opposed to the more inward focus of Noguchi's courtyard.

There is no other way out but to return and go back the same way as one come in, a type of dead-end somewhat appropriate as it signifies the end of a journey, in this case the end of the life of Ken Domon. The experience back proves just as intriguing, although there are no surprises. It is a type of reiteration or summary of both Ken Domon's work as well as Noguchi's, as if experiencing the quiet and reflective recounts of memory where one sees one's life passing by.

The view back into the courtyard upon my return is now more fully appreciated, as there is no anticipation of the destination in my mind. The steps up give a moment of pause. It is a slow walk that allows me to appreciate the experience. It is then that I notice the sound of the water cascading is missing, and although I can see the water steps, there is such a

feeling of separation from the outside. The brief sunshine that peeks out behind the clouds suddenly comes streaming through the windows from a low angle, reminding me that the day is late and the light will soon be diminishing.

Making my way back to the reception, there is an unusual comfort in returning back to the beginning. Perhaps, it is seeing the courtyard once again that allows me to leave on a quiet but bright positive note.

Post Reflective Thoughts

Domon Ken Museum of Photography courtyard looks surprisingly simple and effortless. It is without pretence, and is, powerfully quiet and contemplative. It correlates strongly with the context of Japan, its proximity to the sea and it is, again, a theatrical setting, this time to commemorate a famous photographer.

There is an uncomplicated distillation of thought, with extraordinary exactness of proportion and composition of void and mass to make one feel both inquisitive and comfortable. The work seems to convey other deeper issues of control, isolation, erosion and impermanence through the use of water and stone. There is a "moment-ness" created with the juxtaposition of a solitary stone, standing within the quiet movement of cascading water, one representing the stillness at the end of one's life and the other the continuation of life. The restraint of ideas is the sign of a master at work that only comes from years of experience, knowing what is enough and what is distracting and diluting.

Domon Ken Museum is an evolution of Noguchi's works from *California Scenario* and the earlier experiences from *The UNESCO Garden*. The design of the museum courtyard creates a convincing *place* because the spirit of simplicity and layered complexity through experience is synonymous with the Japanese culture. It is the collaboration with a talented and commendable architect who has similar intentions of making the architecture contemporary; open to interpretation, and *place-specific*. This, combined with Noguchi's work, results in a sensitive response to its context. The experiences of moving through the building and the open sculpted courtyard are co-dependants. It is a respectful union of two talented individuals that each is dependent upon the other for their collaborative success.

Unlike *California Scenario* or *The UNESCO Garden*, the unification of the elements is through carefully proportioned and composed architecture. The elements Noguchi used at *Domon Ken Museum* are simple with terraced forms of cascading water, one basalt

sculpture, a bamboo grove and a granite seat. It is a soft and quiet intervention that speaks of reflection, meditation and contemplation.

The simple clarity of the water-terraced courtyard at *Domon Ken* has a remarkable and powerful calmness. The single pillar of basalt stone is asymmetrically positioned in the space but it is only centred in the opening when viewed from the direct east and west elevation of the building. This is a pivoting reference point when viewing the courtyard from across the pond. This stillness of form is further emphasized by the contrast of moving water that provides a relaxing and soothing acoustical backdrop to the space.

Contextually, there is a subtle but powerful Japanese cultural reference to *wabi sabi*. (See earlier reference in this section). The *wabi* aspect is accomplished through the composition of the elements providing a “one-cornered-ness” composition of restrained gestures echoing simplicity and economy of effort. This is further strengthened with the element of the basalt stone standing alone within the water terraces, conveying a feeling of solitude. The *sabi* aspect is noted through the imperfection of materials and the decomposition of form. The stone used for the water terraces is in a state of discoloration, turning orange, due to its exposure to the continuous running water. The same state of *sabi* is noted in the basalt stone sculpture. (See Image 44)



Image 44: Basalt Stone Figure at
Domon Ken Museum of Photography

As previously referenced, the abstracted image of the *tokonoma* as an architectural framing device is drawn from the design of the classic Japanese teahouse. The sensitive use of the quintessential aesthetic of *wabi-sabi* and the abstract utilization of the

tokonoma combined in a single focused environment makes *Domon Ken* the highest level of *contemplative place* completed by Noguchi during his lifetime.

Post Reflective Thoughts on the Changing Nature of Sited Works

As a post reflective thought of all of my visits to the three sited works of Noguchi, it should be noted that although I had visited and recorded each of these gardens on more than one occasion (in most cases, several times), and always a full day experience from dawn to dusk, the experience is at best only a 'snapshot' of the full spectrum of experiences one could have over the entire existence of the work. For example, there are an infinite number of variations to the experience when taking into consideration the different seasons, time of week, holidays or special occasions/functions, or varying weather conditions of rain, snow, full sun or overcast days, etc. These various circumstances, if recorded, would highlight the change of experience and perhaps the different way in which people would utilize the environments. Observations, which would, in effect, determine its success as a *contemplative place* in these different conditions.

Also worth noting would be the collective experience of repeated visits such as Bert Winter-Tamaki's observations having visited *California Scenario* over a period of several decades. Changes occur with time. Plants grow in a living environment from when they are first planted to when they reach full maturity. Maintenance practices of an environment can change over time and may have an impact on the experience of these works.

I will now analyse the common strategies that Noguchi used in his sited works and by applying my prerequisite conditions proposed in the introduction⁴⁰ will enable me to determine how each of the works qualify as *contemplative places*.

vi. Noguchi's Strategies towards Contemplative Place

In studying the documentations of the three sited works, *The UNESCO Garden*, *California Scenario* and *Domon Ken Museum of Photography*, a number of key aspects of Noguchi's work have been identified, which form a basis to compare his strategies with mine. This is not intended to be a comprehensive list but the beginning of an accumulation based on my research on the background of each project, my phenomenological experience of the works and my post reflective thoughts. The exercise is to identify patterns, changes or shifts in his thinking and design tendencies. The importance of going through Noguchi's

⁴⁰ See page 17.

work is to determine how they qualify as contemplative places and then allow me to go through the same exercise for my own works in the next section.

The following is the beginning of a list of strategies that Noguchi utilized in creating the *contemplative place* aspects of his work. It is noteworthy to point out that unlike my own works Noguchi did not consciously set out to create *contemplative places* in all of his projects. Of the vast repertoire of Noguchi's works the three sited projects used in this research were chosen as I have recognized them as having *contemplative place* qualities. This analysis deals with these specific works and is not to be understood to be applicable to all of his works.

a. The Identification and/or Creation of Differential Space

In all three sited works, Noguchi worked with the architectural space, or influenced the architect, to ensure that "differentiated space" was present or created. Such a space is formed by differentiating itself from what is outside of the work. In the case of Noguchi's sited works it is done architecturally. By doing so he ensured that there was an instilled atmosphere of relative calm compared to the outside. It is difficult to assess the level of influence that Noguchi had directly on the architects for each project but the results are spaces that are clear, quiet and with a state of relative calm. At *UNESCO*, it is a sunken garden with walls (actually office windows) to separate the space from the rest of the complex. In *California Scenario*, there are architectural walls surrounding the space on all sides, the most notable ones being the car park walls that maintain a focus on the central aspect of Noguchi's work. In *Domon Ken Museum of Photography*, there is a carefully orchestrated composition of architecture, landscape and art that harmoniously create a seamless design. The result is a courtyard separated just enough from the outside park to create its own quiet calmness, and yet connected spatially and physically with the water flowing into the pond below.

b. Controlling Space as an Artist and a Landscape Designer

Apart from influencing the architect, there were also numerous occasions when Noguchi worked simultaneously as an artist and landscape designer with the intention to control space to ensure that the experience was conducive to calmness. In the role as a landscape architect he was strongly influenced by the Japanese Zen Garden and used many aspects of it in an abstract way to

determine the layout of his own gardens. At *The UNESCO Gardens*, this was more literal in translation with the overall organic form, the extensive use of rocks and plants, and the use of gravel around the perimeter for spatial delineation, all of which are common techniques found in traditional Japanese gardens. In *California Scenario*, there are fewer plants used to define space, allowing clarity and a greater openness to the plaza. Larger paved areas mean that there is more expansiveness for free movement and gives a very different feeling to the work. At *Domon Ken Museum of Photography*, the spatial configuration brings an immediate sense of calm with the strategic use of *wabi-sabi* aesthetics and composition of elements.

As a strategy Noguchi controlled space through various degrees of abstracting principles of Japanese Zen gardens. In each of the researched works there are varying degrees noted, with *The UNESCO Garden* being the most literal in its translation and *Domon Ken Museum of Photography* being the most abstracted.

c. The Grounded Nature of his Work

The sculptural stone elements within the composition of *The UNESCO Garden*, *California Scenario* and *Domon Ken Museum of Photography*, play a critical role in terms of being the most memorable aspects towards inducing the contemplative quality. Noguchi himself when asked to discuss his germinal sculptural themes in the later years of his life said his work was an “emergence out of the earth” and therefore many of Noguchi’s sculptural works have a sense of being ‘grounded’. To be ‘grounded’ in this context means to be close or connected with the earth.

For *The UNESCO Garden*, Noguchi used natural rocks, pine and cherry trees, water and gravel together with stone elements, such as the sculpturally formed plaza, bridge, stepping stones, and the stele as the source of the water at the *Delegates’ Terrace*. For *California Scenario* the different works use similar natural materials of stone, gravel, plants and water with one exception being *Energy Fountain* made of fabricated metal. For *Domon Ken Museum*, every material is natural with basalt and granite stone, water and bamboo. It is the use of these natural materials that allow them to go through their natural processes of changing over time, growth, erosion, decomposition and in the cases of living plant material dying and regenerating. There exists a psyche

for most human beings that Nature and Nature's materials and processes provide comfort, security, an overall feeling of well being, calm and peace. It is this feeling of being 'grounded' and in contact with Nature that further reinforces Noguchi's work as being contemplative.

d. Creating the Experience of a Pause in his Work

Noguchi created an experience of a pause through different techniques for each of the three sited works. In *The UNESCO Garden*, a series of pauses are created, starting with the *Delegates' Terrace* having a long wood log bench to encourage people to sit and view the garden. Stone seats on the *Delegates' Terrace* are placed in a circle to have discussions. The stele provides a visual pause as one negotiates the stepping stones and stops to view it. The gradually sloping ramp leads one quietly down to a point where a turn into *Jardin Japonais* allows the viewer to pause before crossing the stone bridge. The change of materials as descending down towards the water requires one to pause to decide whether the trip across the stepping stones is preferred or whether one would be happy just standing there and viewing the stone and plant compositions. At the end of the stepping stones is a long stone bench allowing one to turn his back to the office windows and view the garden again but this time from within the garden rather than an overview.

In *California Scenario* there are similar strategies to encourage the experience of a pause with benches strategically placed around the periphery of the garden for office employees to have their lunches and view the different elements of the garden. The difference here is that 'pauses' are experienced, not by making the viewer stop or sit but by having some 'breathing space' between the elements within the composition. Therefore, the viewer may still be moving but it is the time walking between the scenarios that affords a type of pause for reflection of what one has seen or is about to see. Negotiating the stream element running through the centre of the plaza is another technique to have people stop and either turn back or negotiate a route across the water. The most designed place of pause created in *California Scenario* is at the top of *Forest Walk* where benches are placed to face outwards from the grove to the open plaza below. Such a pause is a planned view at the end of the ramp and prescribes that one may slow down, sit to contemplate, and experience those aspects that typically go unnoticed if one is rushed.

At *Domon Ken Museum* the experience is more about moving through the architecture at a reduced speed. The entire experience is a type of pause, as if experiencing a type of walking meditation in a cloister. If one were to enter the water court to investigate more closely they would discover the bench I sat on, discretely sited behind the bamboo planting. It is a place of refuge with one's back against the wall; the view faces courtyard and offers a meaningful experience of pause. Correspondingly, there is another opportunity presented as a pause but this time, internally at the end of the journey of the museum where I sat looking out. The experience of both is very different, particularly as one is in the comfort of being inside the building and looking outward at the view of the pond and mountains, and the other is about sitting outside exposed to the elements and looking inwards at the courtyard.

e. Utilizing Familiar Cultural Icons

One strategy that Noguchi frequently used was the incorporation of abstracted ancient cultural icons as the basic vocabulary of forms in his sited works.

In 1949, Noguchi was able to investigate fully these cultural icons when he received the Bollingen Foundation scholarship to research on leisure. His proposal indicated his intent to have a special focus on "contemplative uses [for re-creation of the mind]" (Bollingen Foundation proposal, 1949). Bonnie Rychlak wrote an article titled *Noguchi: The Bollingen Journey* in which she states that Noguchi "understood that leisure could be contemplative as well as participatory [and] always with a shared sense of proportion and scale, having a relationship between user and space, whether it was Greek, Indian or Japanese". (2003, p. 2)

This interest in leisure time and space in different cultures required an extensive amount of travelling by Noguchi. For six years, he was funded by the Bollingen Scholarship and travelled around the world, numerous times, visiting different cultures and experiencing for himself the ancient cultural monuments, many of which, he would abstractly express in his sited works throughout his career.

As one example of these cultural iconic forms appearing in his sited works, one observes his use of the pyramid. The ancient use of the pyramid in Egypt was as funeral monuments and is one of the most recognized and largest human-

created forms in the world. Noguchi continually used this form in his earthwork proposals, starting with *Sculpture to Be Seen from Mars*, *Monument to the Plow* and *Play Mountain*. Noguchi then utilized the pyramid form more literally when he did an abstracted version, actually clad in stone for the garden at the *IBM Headquarters* in New York City, and then later for *Water Use in California Scenario*. Ana Maria Torres, in her book *Isamu Noguchi: A Study in Space* reveals that “For Noguchi, the pyramid represented the myth of the mountain. It is the most evocative of the three-dimensional symbols because it represents the world axis, the apex symbolizing the highest point of spiritual attainment. The pyramid was used as part of the artist’s basic vocabulary of forms, all of which were related to returning myth and ritual to modern life.” (2000, p. 61)

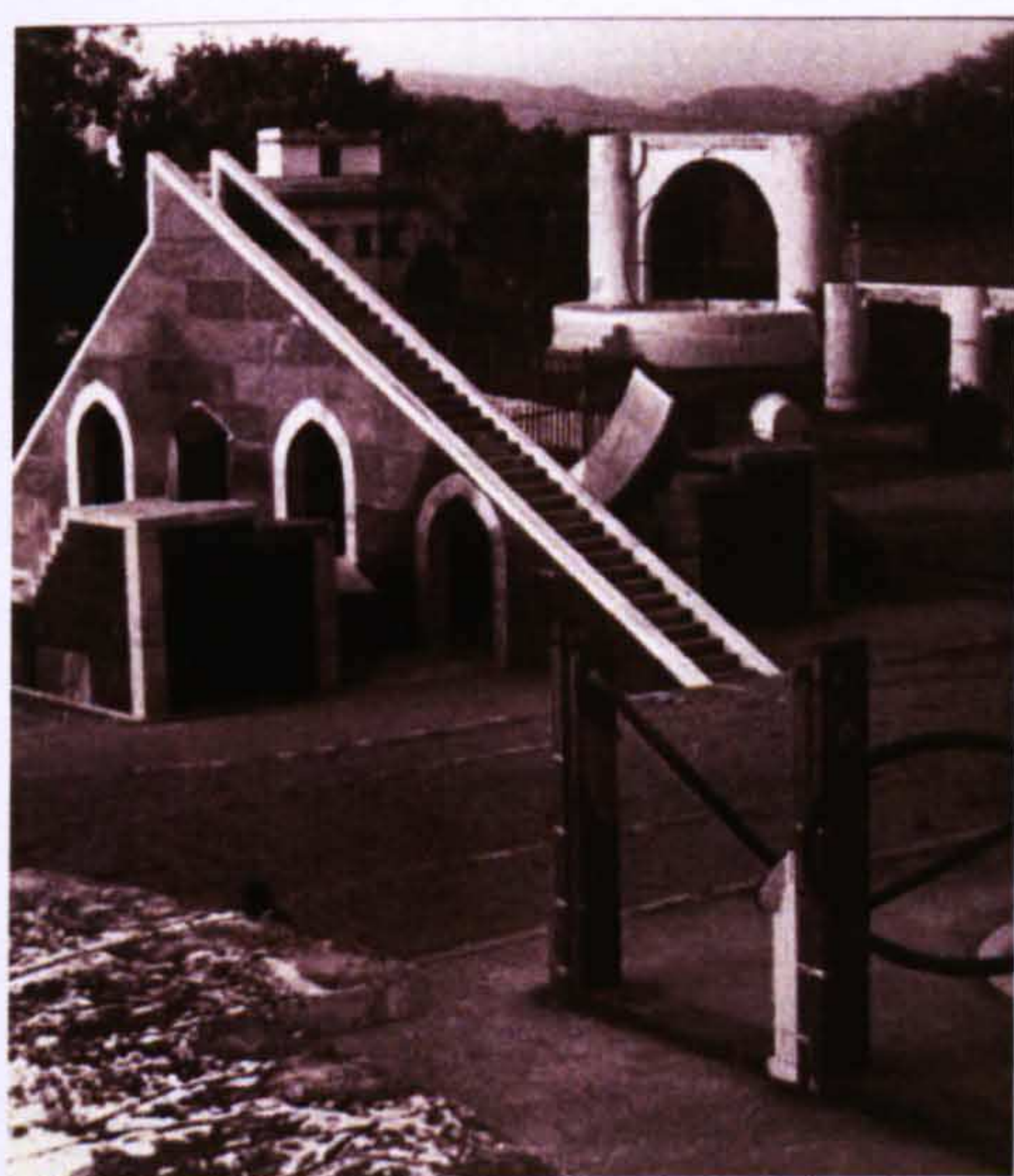


Image 45: *Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II*, 1734; Jaipur, India



Image 46: *The Water Source at California Scenario*

Another major influence one sees in Noguchi’s vocabulary of forms stems from the astronomical instruments built by the *Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II* in Jaipur, India in 1734. Noguchi’s concept for the garden at the *IBM Headquarters* in New York City was based completely upon this work. *Water Source* in *California Scenario* was also from the same reference with its strong vertical triangular form. This eclecticism seems consistent with his process of continually moving from project to project, country to country, changing materials and techniques, never wanting to be labelled by a category of work or style. Noguchi’s consistent use of these cultural icons seems as if he was trying to appeal to a wide, perhaps, global audience, as many viewers would see some familiarity within his works through the use of these obscure yet somewhat familiar forms of the circle, sphere, triangle, cylinder, pyramid, etc.

In many ways, Noguchi's interest in not having a distinct style in order to defy categorization of his work in the mainstream art world was ultimately recognized on his own terms through his use of these easily recognized cultural icons that he abstracted and used repeatedly in his sited works.

To evaluate this strategy of using familiar cultural icons against the most current definitions of what makes a meaningful place would be subject to heavy criticism as not all icons represent or mean the same thing in every culture. This is the danger of using something supposedly universal, when in fact, it is culturally specific. Noguchi had borrowed forms in most cases out of the context of one culture and reintroduced it into another. His effort to abstract these elements and not to literally copy these icons is of noteworthy merit, but the inspiration was due to the global appeal rather than locally inspired.

The cultural icon that Noguchi more successfully evolved over the years in many projects was his interpretation of the Japanese Zen garden. Marc Treib refers specifically to Noguchi's inspiration for *The UNESCO Garden* in Paris as "the garden revealed trace influences from the stroll gardens of seventeenth-century Japan or the earlier dry gardens of the Zen sect." (2004, p. ix) He continued to refine this icon with his work in *California Scenario* and then reached his ultimate abstract expression, appropriately in Japan, for the *Domon Ken Museum* in Sakata. It is here that Noguchi exercised an extraordinary amount of restraint with a clear simple composition of a limited number of elements, which reflected abstract qualities of a minimalist Zen garden. In this instance, it has a universal familiarity and yet is correctly located, in terms of acknowledging its place in Sakata, the photographer it memorializes, and Japan itself.

f. The Theatrical Nature of Noguchi's Work

Noguchi never forgot the importance of space, particularly when it related to the theatrical aspects of his design. His interest was exploring the relationship of objects, which he described as "figurative spaces, man-made spatial oases for the twentieth century". This vision was fulfilled on numerous occasions through his sited works. (2004, p. 285)

Noguchi's work on Martha Graham's stage designs profoundly influenced his understanding of the way spaces could be experienced. He had worked on a countless number of set designs of which Graham selected those she felt suitable for her dance performances. His set designs were abstract and he was fascinated by the movement of the dancers as they defined the voids around the work. The movement, sequence, scale and illusion were not only important aspects in set design, but the whole theatrical notion of being on display or the importance of participating through watching was also evident in his sited works.

At *The UNESCO Garden*, the *Delegates Terrace* is a theatrical stage and Treib refers to the ramped bridge that connects the two buildings as a traditional *hanamichi* or "flower path", which is the walkway the actors use to enter and exit a Japanese theatre. The lower terrace in the garden also has these theatrical qualities of being on stage or at least the sense of waiting for something to happen. (2003, p. 47)

In *California Scenario*, there is a harmonious balance between the influence of the Japanese Zen gardens and Noguchi's theatrical "stage setting" qualities. What Noguchi did was to choreograph a meaningful experience of contemplation with seven elements that could only be understood as a whole, for it is the interrelatedness of the elements that gives the synergistic strength to the work.

The experience at *Domon Ken Museum* is clearly about theatre where everyone is an observer. Being in the courtyard, one circles the basalt stone and reflects upon its importance and meaning. The space itself is performing, with the water symbolising the passing of time and the upright stone marking a physical space and an abstract point in time. The analogy of the space to a *tokonoma*, which is traditionally used for display and viewed from one vantage point across a pond but is abstracted to a type of stage when viewed from many sides and speaks of a static performance that awaits its audience.

g. Incorporating References to the Regional Context

Noguchi's strategy for incorporating references to the regional context of his work evolved over the course of four decades of creating sited works. Regional context refers to the surrounding locality or position of where the

work is sited. *California Scenario* by its title refers to the environments of the State of California. *The Spirit of the Lima Bean*, *Water Source*, *Water Use*, *Land Use*, *Desert Land*, *Forest Walk* and *Energy Fountain* are abstract representations of farmlands, water sources, the environments of the desert and forest, and man's intervention on the land. The expression of the work is less obvious than the titles imply, thereby offering the viewer more depth and allowing the work to be more open to interpretation.

In *Domon Ken Museum*, Noguchi's reference to the regional context is more subtle and layered. Upon post reflection, it was my insight while meditating in the courtyard that one is continually having the experience of being on the edge or periphery of things, starting from where I sat which was on a bench at the edge of Noguchi's water courtyard. Prior to this, I was walking along the periphery of the building façade. Then I understood that the building itself was not centred on the promenade coming into the park but was specifically sited to be on the edge of the pond and in the hill. It then occurred to me that the park itself was on the edge of the river and located on the periphery of the city. By further reversing the experience of arriving, one is aware that even the train ride from Tokyo to Sakata, is along the edge of the Sea of Japan. This reinforcement of being close to the edge or periphery of things is a strong reference of the work, directly relating to the regional context of arriving at and departing from the work.

h. Embracing of the Sculptural Object

Although this aspect of his work is not a specific strategy towards the creation of *contemplative places*, it is identified as a tendency that impedes Noguchi's work from being critically considered as a *place*. Noguchi tended to embrace his sculpted forms too excessively. In some cases, he completely ignored the context of his work jeopardizing its meaningfulness in relation to *contemplative place*.

Using the criteria of *place* and *contemplation* as a basis of evaluating Noguchi's work actually raises a number of critical questions regarding his sited work. Being foremost a sculptor, Noguchi tended to hold more value in the sculptural pieces, as objects that he created, by making them central to his three sited works. This was done in varying degrees at each location but in

each instance ultimately compromised the integrity of the work, which needed to be relevant to its context.

In the case of *The UNESCO Garden*, Noguchi's literal use of the bamboo water spouts, the stone elements of the lantern, bridge and seats, the Japanese cherry trees and pines, and even the sacred mill stone used in the gravel are all elements of traditional Japanese origins and do not fit into the context of the Modern architecture of UNESCO. It is out of synchronization with its context.

In *California Scenario*, his utilization of familiar cultural icons such as the pyramid, and forms inspired by the astronomical instruments built by the *Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II* in Jaipur, India worked against the notion that Noguchi's work was specific to its location and context in California.

In *Domon Ken Museum*, the only question of contextual appropriateness is the basalt stone used as the focal point of the courtyard. Having visited Noguchi's studio in Mure, one cannot help bringing into question whether Noguchi made the basalt sculpture specifically for that site or if he simply chose one of the many basalt pieces he was working on at that time to place into Sakata? The lost opportunity was that Noguchi could have chosen a regional stone like what is seen along the rocky west coast of Japan thereby giving his work a geological referencing back to its place.

By analysing each of these strategies it is apparent that Noguchi's sited works have met the prerequisite conditions that have been determined in this research as creating a successful *contemplative place*. Each of the works have varying degrees of an environment of relative calm, an identity that is specific to its location and an opportunity for the work to foster relationships over time.

I. My Processes

It is understood with my clients at the onset of a commission that my intention is to create or enhance places of contemplation. Each commission is part of a larger responsibility of designing the landscape and in some cases the master planning of the overall development. Fortunately, this allows me, as the artist, to spend more time than usual on the site to go through my research processes. These projects provide the opportunity for me to function in dual roles as an artist and a landscape architect and gain the level of control similar to what Noguchi had on his sited works.

The processes of my practice have developed throughout this research and have involved several techniques to understand a *place* as it currently exists. These techniques are a series of *phenomenological reduction* practices to experience the site and its regional surroundings as it exists. It also involves *phenomenological disclosure* in the form of post reflective documentation, which is carried out so that the essence of the *place* begins to surface. It is an adaptive and experimental process of investigation that documents the experience that is both objective and subjective in nature. The *factual* research analysis refers to the inventory of what can be documented either quantitatively or qualitatively. The *experiential* research analysis is based on documentation of the intuitive aspects of the site that are more akin to “a feeling” that enters the process either consciously or subconsciously. It involves a higher level of awareness and sensitivity, and takes more time than the *factual* research analysis.

a. Factual Research Analysis

Being a landscape architect implies that by viewing the site through “trained eyes” the resulting design will deal adequately with the site constraints as well as the opportunities presented. This process of collecting factual information is typically referred to as the stages of inventory and analysis. Panoramic pictures and/or videos are commonly taken and brought back to serve as a reference, but more often as evidence that the site has been viewed. On-site handwritten notes are filed, documenting such existing conditions as: vegetation, sun orientation, wind direction, tidal information, soil types, drainage, levels, access, water, vegetation, topography, existing structures, environmental issues, settlements, rock outcrops or any other pertinent physical qualities of the land. This belongs to the *factual* research analysis stage and is completed after the necessary information has been collected and documented.

As my research addresses critical issues of *place*, further *factual* research, beyond the physical elements of the site, is essential, which means that I need to develop a regional understanding of the context of the work, including the cultural, historical and social issues of its location. This could involve activities such as reviewing books, articles and archives, conferring with users including the local community, professional historians, sociologists, anthropologists, geologists, etc as well as visiting other relevant places in the region, in an attempt to understand the importance of the site from as many different facets as possible.

b. Experiential Research Analysis

The stage of experiential research analysis involves going beyond the factual information of a *place* to augment the clarity of the site experience and to understand it in a more complete and fresh way. This involves the analysis of the site intuitively and is more often than not a series of separately planned trips to the site and region. The primary purpose is to focus on the instinctive feelings of the site. Developing a 'feel' or having 'a sense for 'the resonance of a *place* means attuning to the right side of the brain that is intuitively and artistically inclined than the left side of the brain that is more logical and rationale. To develop this 'feel' is to develop a higher level of sensitivity and awareness beyond the five senses of one's body. If a phenomena refers to things that human beings experience then it must include that which one intuitively knows or senses as this is as important as seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, etc. and therefore is 'a legitimate topic for phenomenological investigation'.⁴¹ This phenomenon is what Seamon found to be the usefulness of phenomenology as it "reconcile[d] the difficult tensions between feeling and thinking."⁴²

Visiting the site on several occasions allows one to experience the *place* at different times of the day, week, month or season. Invariably, the quieter time is preferred, when less people are present such as the early morning, evening or off-season period. Such calmer times are often more conducive for intuitive "listening" and enables one to experience the subtle nuances and sensitivities of the *place* that would otherwise be missed with all of its various distractions. *Experiential* research analysis takes time, patience and awareness. In some instances it may be appropriate to seek out places where people casually congregate as this atmosphere or environment may constitute the essence of that particular *place*. These may be places that are quiet "backwaters" or "eddies" where

⁴¹ See page 22.

⁴² Seamon [2000], p. 160.

people are relaxing, pondering, chatting with friends or waiting. In other instances one is seeking out where people are contemplating and then researching what are the qualities of this space that make it specific to that particular place and induces one to experience contemplation?

Due to the nature of this exercise, which cannot be achieved in a rushed, methodical, measured or timed fashion, the researcher needs to begin in a relaxed but alert state of mind. Sitting, walking, pausing, reflecting, and strolling with points of rest, all can help one to relax and absorb. *Experiential* research analysis takes different information onboard through different methods than that of the *factual* research analysis. The process is more subconscious than conscious, done quietly without talking, without any agenda, almost without purpose. It allows one to slowly develop a “feel” for the place, allows the character of the place to distil itself so that one can experience the site for what it really is, whether it is good or bad; it is meant to discover/reveal the essence of its true nature. Robert Irwin describes his processes of extended site visits as what is done “without ambitions, without conclusions; without any particular focus.” (1993, p. 277)

In actual practice this *experiential* research analysis is more difficult than it seems. At times it can be a struggle to objectively describe one’s feelings in an academic and critical way. It requires communicating the subtle nuances of a site and the understated differences that make that particular place special. Within my own processes the documentation of the *experiential* analysis is also more intuitive. The intention is to document this analysis in a way, which best conveys the essence and/or the most memorable aspects of the site and therefore is quite different from the conventional methods of photographing and writing used in the *factual* analysis. Instead the way in which the feeling of the site’s resonance is captured and communicated is in the form of *abstract intuitive expressions* such as poetry writing, sketching, sculpting, photographing or videoing. Each of these is expressed, created, composed or choreographed more as an art form than a document. Other possibilities that have not yet been explored could include painting, dance and music. The purpose is to have a variety of tools that allows an expression of an intuitive feeling that often cannot be adequately expressed through conventional *factual* research analysis.

c. Developing the Work

The process of absorbing sufficient factual and experiential information takes a considerable amount of time and effort and, in many instances there is too much information to be distilled. Through the processes of Seamon’s *phenomenological*

reduction, one's intuition plays a key role in this distillation exercise. The utilization of phenomenological intuiting on site followed by *phenomenological disclosure* allows the mind to draw filtered conclusions, typically over an extended period of time but sometimes the clarity of the phenomena could appear suddenly at any stage of the process.

The method for allowing one's own intuition to develop clarity is to avoid logic or rationalization to dictate the process of creativity. It is an exercise of liberating one's mind from the *factual* research analysis and allowing the *experiential* research analysis to determine a series of alternative options. These options take various physical forms, beginning with sketches and evolving into a series of models that are explored and studied. At times, these models and/or sketches are not directly relevant to the physical site but speak of the spirit of the place. They are abstract, therefore not necessarily made to scale. In many instances, the options explored are almost a way of "venting" one's ideas in order to reveal and dispose of the conventional or preconceived notions of the site or project. More options are developed, assessed and further explored. Different materials are experimented with as their nature or association with the actual physical site may prompt new directions for experimenting. Therefore various materials are brought from the site to the studio such as the actual stone, soil, relics, and plants. The *experiential* exploration of options is documented in all my case studies with one of them - titled *Art Gardens within a Tea Garden* in Beilun, China - used as a particular example, which is expanded upon in a later section.

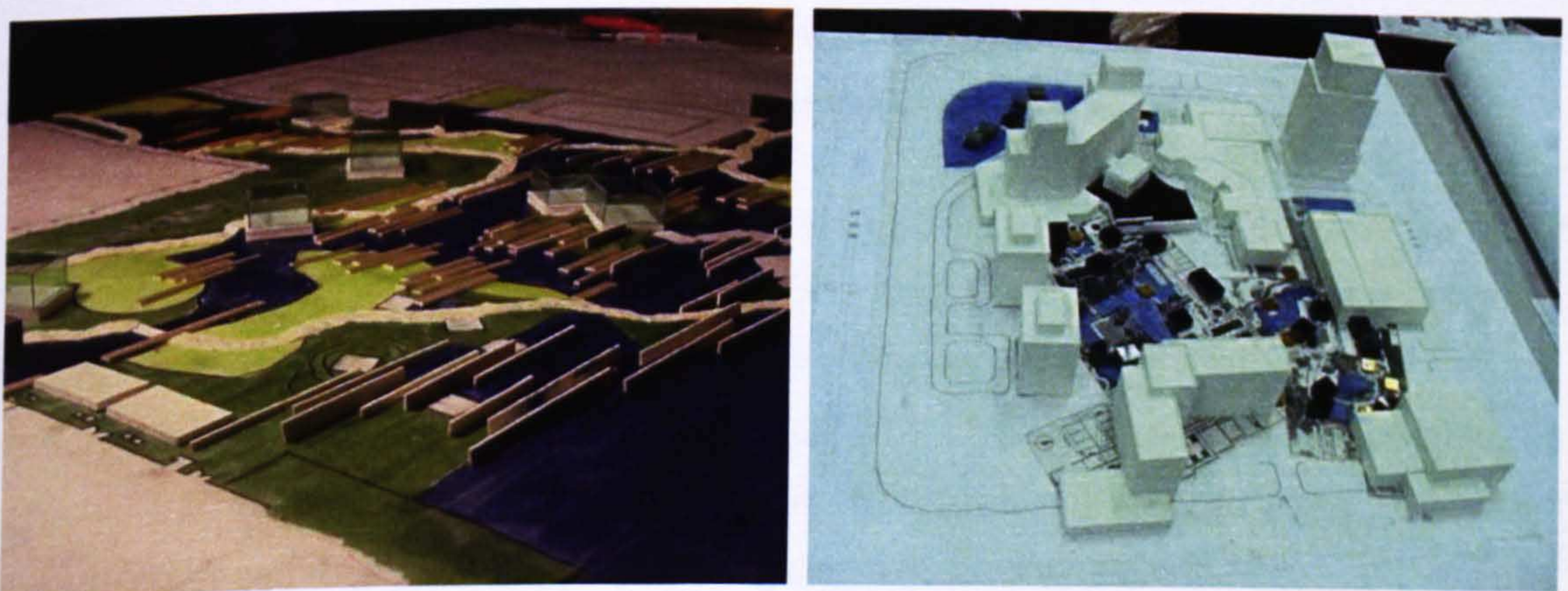


Image 47: Various options as working models, *Art Gardens within a Tea Garden*, Beilun, China

As these options develop, a testing is then carried out by comparing these studies with the findings of the *experiential* research analysis. For example, a set of models or sketches may be tested by comparing the work against the poem, sketch and/or video taken in the experiential research analysis to determine which of the alternative options seem more in sync with the analysis and which one feels foreign or literally out of *place*. This is an

individual but informed call and typically raises the following questions. Which of the options have similar characteristics in terms of strength, softness, coolness, mystic, grounded, etc that is uncovered in the experience? What is at the heart of the *experiential* research analysis (i.e. poetry, photograph or sketch) and which of the options best captures this essence? Does any idea appear to be alien or perhaps predetermined as a forced impression imposed upon its location?

One then looks at the *factual* research analysis of its physical, cultural, historical and/or social context and asks a different set of questions. Does it relate to its context? Does it raise questions about where it is or why it is here? Lippard's set of questions is then raised singularly or collectively. Is it specific, layered, open, simple, appealing, evocative and/or critical?⁴³ In some instances, this objective testing proves more difficult than the intuitive part because of the need to keep the idea abstract and not to take the easier option of literally copying objects of the *place* to make it relevant but not necessarily critical.

During the exploration of alternatives, sketches become fewer and physical models prevail as explorative tools. Again new sets of questions arise as one starts to see the three-dimensional forms taking shape in the model. To what extent does one need to intervene on this site in order to express the significance of the *place* and convey a sense of contemplation? How will the experience of this work be remembered three dimensionally? Are we using the right forms, materials, construction techniques in order to capture the feeling of the site or is it completely different by contrasting and questioning other issues such as the works' appropriateness in today's context?

The question of experience is critical. In my opinion, for models to be effective as working tools of an investigation, one needs to be *in* the model and not merely looking down upon it. A miniature wireless camera - 20mm x 20mm x 20mm in size - allows me, as a researcher, to view and experience the model at a physically relevant perspective, as if one were in the model and moving through the work. It is at this perspective view that the simulated experience of seeing and moving can then be assessed.⁴⁴

⁴³ See reference to Lippard in the introduction to refer to the complete questions and their rationale on page 16.

⁴⁴ It should be noted that although this is a simulated experience there are limitations on to what extent it represents what one would actually experience (i.e. There are no other senses such as sound, smell or feel simulated in the video – see notes on case studies).



Image 48: Miniature wireless camera

d. Physical Working Space and Process

The ongoing research processes on the site and region are then complemented with processes within the studio. In most instances there is a switching from the site to the studio and back again, sometimes over a period of months. In order to accommodate these processes, several physical changes in the space of my studios in Singapore and China needed to drastically change for accommodating the experimentation and testing of options. The following is a description of the physical elements and corresponding stages of my processes utilized in my studio.

1) *The Contemplative Circuit*

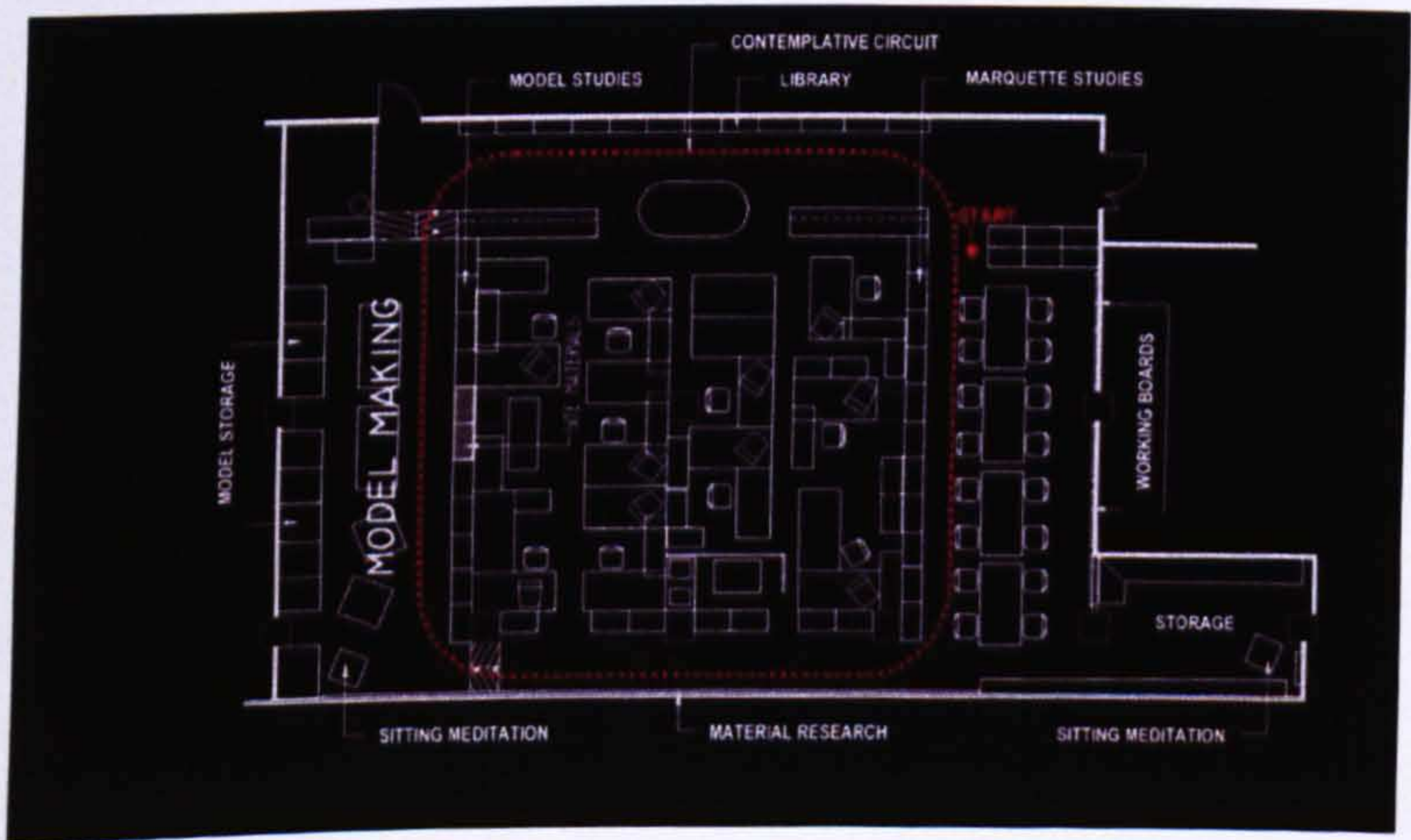


Image 49: Okashimo's Studio Layout, Singapore
Red dots and arrow indicate flow of movement



Image 50: Okashimo's Studio, Singapore (Refer to video from DVD Disk, Appendix 10)

Utilizing walking as a vehicle for contemplation, a journey is taken on a circuit within my studios in Singapore and China⁴⁵, a loop that has no beginning or end point, a route without destination. Walking is my tool for contemplation. It allows me to move away from my work and return with new insights, thoughts, and directions and then to move away again to think or ponder in a relaxed but alert state. The stimulation of other senses is being experimented with, so one could simulate for example the olfactory experiences of the site with flowers and/or plants brought to the studio or recording the sound of bamboo rustling in the wind could help to remind me of the site's character. These are tools to jolt one's memories by simulating and/or physically bringing, in effect, the site closer to the artist.

There are also seats for meditation usually done in the early morning, hours before a day starts. Two seats are placed within the circuit that provide the opportunity to sit without thinking, a way to clear one's mind, and to concentrate and experience the present moment.

⁴⁵ Please refer to PowerPoint Show and videos from DVD Disk, Appendix 09 - Okashimo's Processes, Appendix 10 - Okashimo's Studio, Singapore and Appendix 11 - Okashimo's Studio, Xiamen, China.

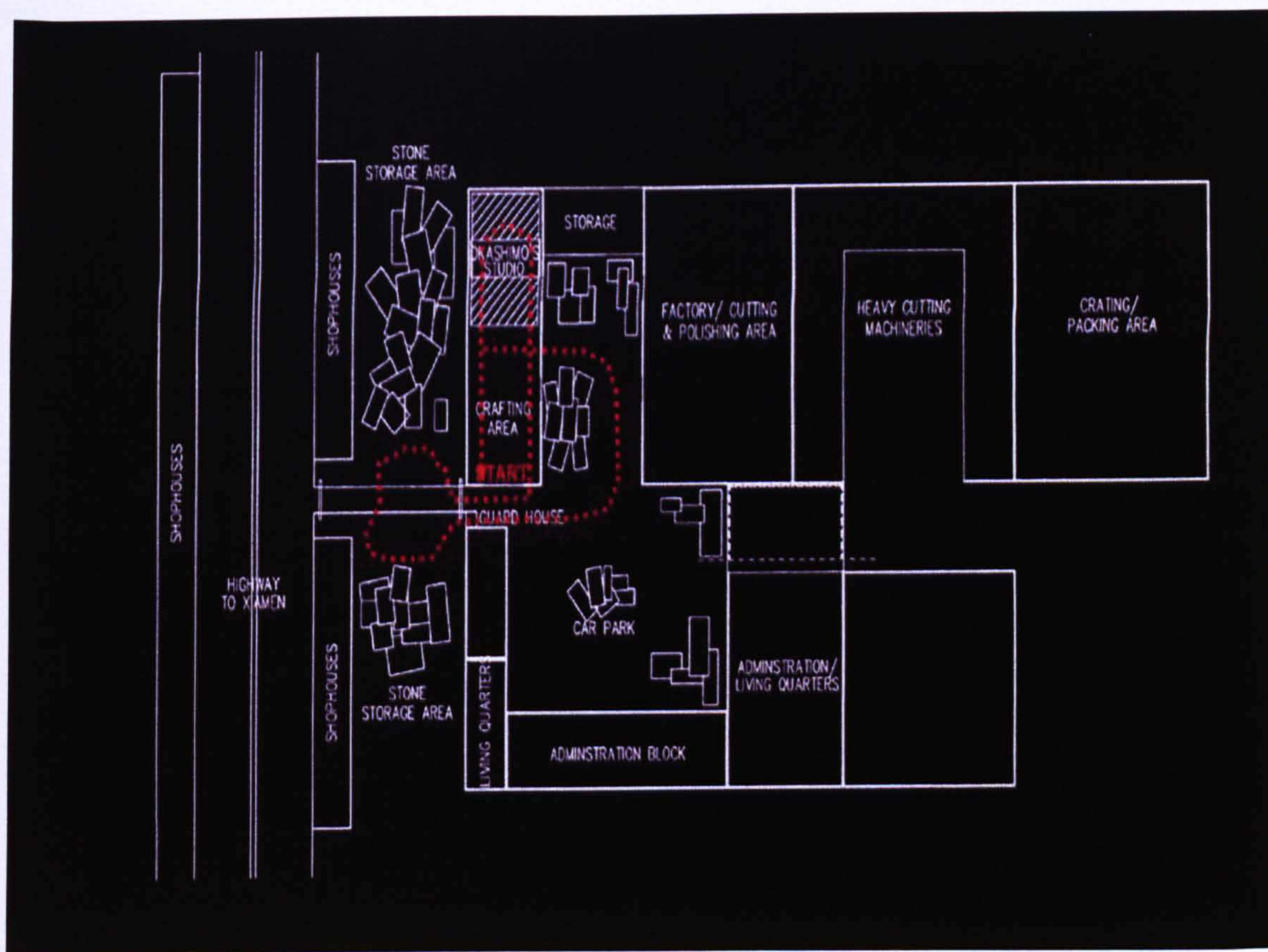


Image 51: Okashimo's Studio Layout, Xiamen, China
Red dots and arrow indicate flow of movement



Image 52: Okashimo's Studio, Xiamen, China. (Refer to video from DVD Disk, Appendix 11)

Walking and sitting is part of my methodology and a tool towards seeking a distillation of my work through contemplative experiences. Artists such as Hamish Fulton, Richard Long and Tim Brennan are worth highlighting as each of them use walking and immersing oneself within the experience of an environment as an art form. This parallels my practice but differs in its outcome.

Fulton's art takes its form as walks within environments. The result is a series of selected photographs that captures the essence of his journey together with a few key words. For him, the walk is a "spiritual experience [of the] intimate relationship that exists between himself and nature."⁴⁶

Richard Long's work is also made by walking through landscapes but rather than photographing an essence, he brings the 'elemental' materials of the landscape to the gallery where the "sculpture could now be about place as well as material and form".⁴⁷ Where 'the walk is the art', Long explores the issue of having alternative reasons for walking rather than, for example, arriving at a destination. He seeks to investigate the "relationships between time, distance, geography and measurement".⁴⁸

Tim Brennan's form of an organized walk as a 'manoeuvre' specifically deals with time and place and straddles other more traditional regions of "performance art, the historical tour, loco-descriptive poetry, pilgrimage, expanded notions of sculpture, curating and plain old pedestrianism".⁴⁹

For Fulton, Long and Brennan, the act of walking is central to their work and is physically evidenced through artworks and documentation. My use of walking, by contrast, is important to my process but not central to the message of my works. It is a physical act that allows my mind to distill and therefore means I walk without a destination, without a beginning or an end, doing so almost without thinking.

Upon post reflection, the actual act of walking could uncover other aspects of my work if I were to be more conscious of the way I walk rather than just walking in a contemplative state of mind. Michael de Certeau, in his book 'The Practice of Everyday Life', refers to 'pedestrian speech acts' where 'the act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or to the statements uttered' (1984, p.97) where the act of walking

⁴⁶ Smith and Spector [n.d.].

⁴⁷ Long [2000].

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Brennan [2005].

'affirms, suspects, tries out, transgresses, respects, etc the trajectories it 'speaks'. All the modalities sing a part in this chorus, changing from step to step, stepping in through proportions, sequences, and intensities which vary according to the time, the path taken and the walker.'" (1984, p. 99) By correlating the act of walking on my contemplative circuit with the actual contemplative walking as an experience on the site perhaps could reveal new insights as to the relationship between the two.

2) Working Boards and Research Analysis Reports



Image 53: Working boards in Okashimo's Studio, Singapore

A pin-up board (12 meters x 2.2 meters) is utilized in the studio to make each relevant piece of information from the *factual* and *experiential* analysis visually accessible whenever practically possible. Such information is then compiled into a report format that is maintained as a reference until construction. By having the research visually accessible on the working boards during the various stages, and a report to be reviewed later, the research takes physical forms that are used as recalling tools rather than simply relying upon one's memory. The immediate availability and visibility of relevant information serves as a reminder to test the development of the work and encourages the revisiting of the research on a permanent recurring basis.

3) Site Materials and Local Processes

As earlier noted, objects and samples from the site or region are sometimes found and brought to the studio. It is an attempt to bring aspects of the site as a reference to assist in better understanding the relevant physical components of the site (i.e. actual soil, rocks, plants and objects such as bricks, cut stones, relics, etc). Material processes are researched through experimentation. Techniques for manipulating and altering these materials are studied and reviewed in my studio in China. One example sited in my case

studies is *Stone Traces* where I research the process of granite stone cutting that is videoed for documentation.



Image 54: Stone cutting, Xiamen, China (Refer to video from DVD Disk, Appendix 12)

4) Working Models

As earlier mentioned, the need to work with models for the purpose of visualizing the space and testing the experience through miniature cameras is crucial to the research process, which means that adequate space is required to develop these tools of investigation. Storage of materials used to make these models and the models themselves in their various scales and states of completion need adequate space to layout and study which may comprise as many as ten models at a single time. The laying out and displaying of the alternative options allows a proper comparison and/or understanding of the evolution of the works being researched. The model making is done within visual proximity of the working boards to allow for a testing of the options against the *factual* and *experiential* research. (See Image 55 and Image 56)

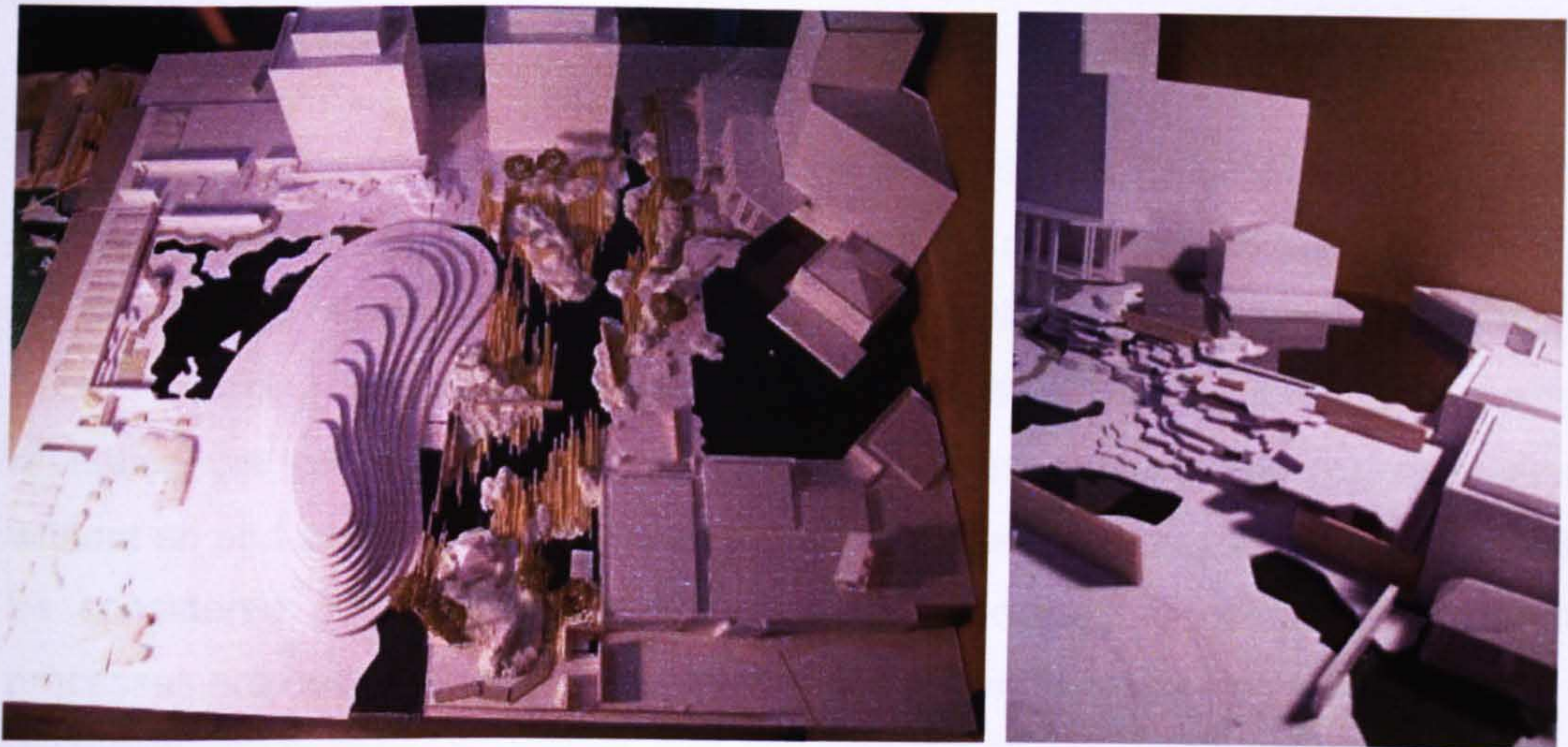


Image 55: Working Models



Image 56: Model making area, Okashimo's Studio, Singapore

5) *Narrative Research Writing*

Using the contemplative circuit, I start by walking as a method of contemplating, periodically stopping to make notes. Throughout this circuit are various surfaces such as counters, tables and chairs that allow writing to take place. The writing begins as an imagined narrative that walks me through the spaces as they might be experienced. It describes, in sequence, where I am, what I see, smell, and how I feel. It speaks of the experience as it unfolds. The narrative has its mysticism and unravels like a plot disclosing a journey. It is a journey that in turn discloses a process allowing it to be experienced without having an understanding of the overview of the works until the end.

The discipline of writing about an experience as a research tool has proven as a useful technique to distill my thoughts and to remain focussed on the nature of the experience. The written articulation then becomes another document that can be used as a reference and criteria when testing the works at the model and final completion stages.

e. *Cyclical and Random Sequencing of Steps*

A cyclical but many times random pattern evolves with walking and sitting within the contemplative circuit, narrative writing, model making, testing alternative options against the *factual* and *experiential* analysis, reviewing materials and processes and then coming back; reworking the narrative, reworking the models, each informing the other, and repeating the process in different sequences. These processes continue, seemingly, without an end and then at any given moment, the process could stop and the work could be considered complete where evidence of its journey is obvious and the thinking processes are documented, to be resumed whenever the need may arise.

f. *Collaboration with Others*

As part of the processes within the studio, I choose to involve other designers, specialists and the client if they are willing to participate at the various stages. In each case study, the work was collaborative. An invitation was extended to all parties involved and should they want to take part and/or contribute in the site analysis, studio work in Singapore and/or China, as well as at the production stage of the works, their participation and comments are welcome. Architects, interior designers and lighting consultants, for understandable reasons, have been particularly interested in the model-video stage of the works, as well as, in viewing the actual scaled models for themselves. Some architects have participated at every stage of the works and have made worthwhile comments accordingly. The client is, typically, curious and may attend the formal presentations in the studio, during which, they would understand the processes and the research work involved. Questions are fielded which may prompt new areas of investigation. The clients on several projects have also been to my China studio, which has allowed them to see, firsthand, the way in which the work is produced, the problems encountered, and the clients themselves have sometimes been involved in solving technical or aesthetic problems of the work.

g. *Post Reflective Thoughts*

Significant to this process is the "down time," when no work is done but simply left for viewing, understanding and reflecting, which is a valuable pause to further understand and recall impressions from the site, impressions that are internalised intuitively. An evaluation develops. Most times, this down time is quiet, without discussion for days or

weeks, while other responsibilities of the development are attended to.⁵⁰ This has been an important chance for me to update my narrative or research writing as a form of documentation.

A revisit of the process ensues, with further questions arising, further distilling of the essence of the place through the phenomenological intuiting and disclosures. The cycle starts over, with the works changing, experimenting again, using the wireless miniature camera to video, analysing and changing the actual experience of moving through the space to improve the experience. Many times it is through the narrative writing that new directions or refinements may need investigating, or it may involve the resurrecting of old directions left behind.

h. Construction Review

Even with the works under construction, the process of creativity presents itself with problems on the site. Typically, there is some trouble with time and budget but also other unique challenges arise such as material availability, weight or size restrictions, or accessibility for vehicles and equipment entering the site. Continued monitoring of the construction activities is critical to ensure that the integrity of the works is maintained and not compromised. Many problems present new opportunities to review the essence of the work and improve the outcome. With complete documentation of the process up to that point, it is possible to revisit different aspects (videos, working models, working boards, research analysis reports, etc.) and determine an alternative solution.

i. Post Construction Analysis

Continued visits after completion are critical for understanding one's work. The analysis is an attempt to experience the work for what it is, and to document the experience as if one were confronting the work for the first time. As it is not practical for the artist who has an intimate knowledge for years about the works, the intention is to try to remain as impartial as possible using the phenomenological approach to experience the work for what it actually is, neither what it should have been, nor what it could have been. By comparing with the model videos and/or narrative writing done during its inception, one can determine the strengths and weaknesses of the outcome of the processes. Finally, one needs to carry out an intuitive analysis at the completion, in an alert but relaxed state of mind, to determine if the work presents itself as a *contemplative place*. It is an

⁵⁰ There is a substantial break in the development process that is after the design stage and prior to construction for the purpose of tendering and awarding the works.

independent but informed call. What typically results from such an outcome is a need to review the processes and perhaps the definitions that define *contemplative place*.

j. Third Party Survey of My Works

Referring back to the definition of *contemplative place* as being “a space where a meaningful sense of calm could be experienced” and *contemplation* being “a clear, quiet, calm state of mind that induces insightful thoughts beyond one’s day to day concerns”, it would require a validation by the user if the experience they had was contemplative and that a meaningful sense of calm was felt. For this reason it was prudent that a third party survey would be conducted regarding the work wherever appropriate. Of the three case studies, one such project was suitable, *Holding in Place*, as it was located in a hotel environment. A number of staff and guests were interviewed and video recorded and is expanded upon in the analysis of this case study later in this section.

The survey results provide critical feedback from third parties experiencing the site. Although the analysis of my own work through phenomenological methods is the basis of my research, the participant’s survey validates or revokes my findings as well as provides new unexpected insights into my work.

ii. My Sited Works

Paralleling Noguchi in the format of this thesis, my own body of work forms the practice based aspect of this research. Similar to the worldwide nature of Noguchi’s projects, I felt it was appropriate to choose projects that deal with varying international challenges — different places with different cultures, histories, societies and environments. I therefore chose one case study in China, one in Malaysia and the last one in Singapore.

The three case studies chosen are: *Art Gardens within a Tea Garden*, Beilun, China, which is currently under construction and expected to be completed in 2008, *Holding in Place*, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, which was completed in August 2005 and lastly, *Stone Traces*, an installation in Singapore completed in December 2006.

Due to the extensiveness of information for each project, only a part of each process has been chosen to highlight different aspects of my research processes and principles.⁵¹ It is duly noted in each case study.

⁵¹ Please see appendix as indicated for each works.

Art Gardens within a Tea Garden, Beilun, China.



Image 57: *Art Gardens within a Tea Garden, Beilun, China*

This series of works is in Beilun in Southern China, a three hour drive southwest of Shanghai. The region has a rich history of tea production as well as some of the most important temples where, based on records, the original immigrants from China travelled to Japan and founded Zen Buddhism. It is also the major port for the vicinity of the city of Beilun where the Silk Road is believed to have ended as an historic transcontinental trading route.

Art Gardens within a Tea Garden is a series of five small gardens strategically placed within an overall hotel garden environment that is approximately 2.0 Hectare in size. The five art gardens are: *Garden of the Forgotten Rocks*, *Beginning of Water Garden*, *Wood Garden*, *Chess Garden* and *Bridge Garden*. For the purpose of this research, only the first two gardens, *Garden of the Forgotten Rocks* and *Beginning of Water Garden* will be analysed.

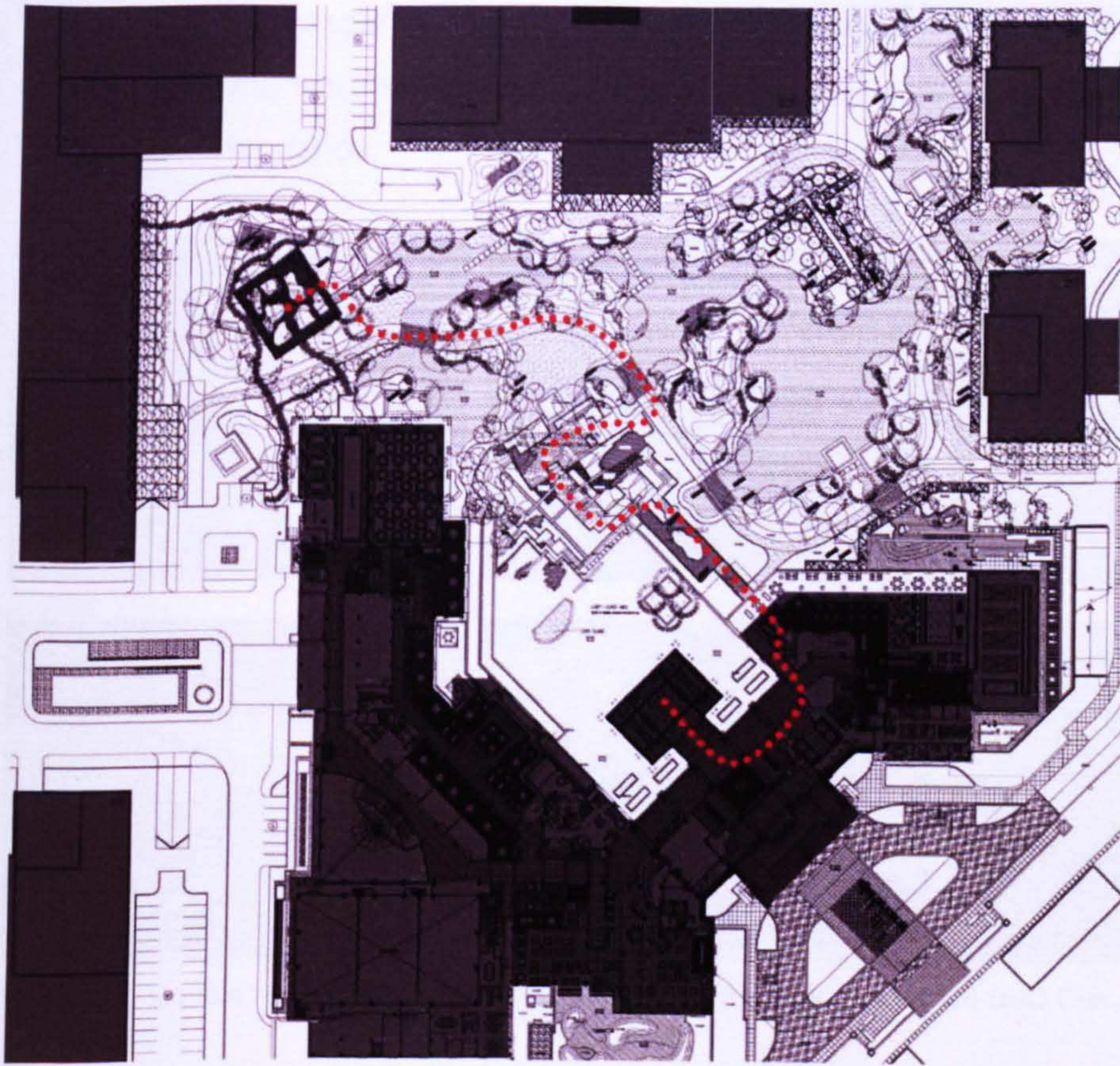


Image 58: *Art Gardens within a Tea Garden*, Beilun, China – Site Plan
Red dots and arrows indicate flow of movement

These gardens and the research⁵² involved illustrate how the process of my practice has resulted in a complexity of research when attempting to capture the history and culture of a country such as China that has spanned over thousands of years. There is an ongoing necessity to distil the overwhelmingly dense information resulting from the objective and subjective analysis stages.

As a starting point for the factual research, the narrowing down and identifying of the chronological segment of Chinese history to be considered for this research is necessary. The historic importance of tea drinking as a social art form reached its highest state in the Sung Dynasty. I felt that this period would be one of the most appropriate points in time, as the historical context of the garden, to start one's research. As a result, the overall garden was conceived as a contemporary tea garden of the Sung Dynasty period.

⁵² Please refer to PowerPoint Show from DVD Disk, Appendix 13- *Art Gardens within a Tea Garden*, Working Models Development; Appendix 14 - *Art Gardens within a Tea Garden*, Landscape Concept Design Report and Appendix 15- *Art Gardens within a Tea Garden*, Site and Regional Analysis Report.

The experiential research analysis conducted is based on several videos, one of which is of a couple who were sweeping willow tree leaves on a lawn in the early morning on the West Lake, Hangzhou.



Image 59: Couple sweeping leaves, Hangzhou, China (Refer to video from DVD Disk, Appendix 18)

Although the couple is working as captured in this video, the feeling for the viewer is one of rhythmic softness and quiet solitude. The repetitive nature of the sweeping has a mesmerizing aspect that quietens the mind. The pictures taken within the video seem to *freeze* or hold a particular moment of the sequence. It is this freezing and repetitive movement that portrays the notion that it is an endless cycle analogous to the life of leaves —growing, dying, dropping and growing back. The photos appear measured and rhythmic yet relaxing and calming – not forced. The light of the morning sun and the shade on the soft and yielding willow leaves reinforces this feeling of calm.

This video along with others and the poetry written in a bamboo grove near the site (See Image 60) provide the experiential research analysis from which I can evaluate the feeling of my works as I studied alternatives for each of the gardens.



Image 60: Bamboo Grove, Ningbo, China (Refer to video from DVD Disk, Appendix 19)

The following is an example of an abstracted intuitive expression using poetry in the experiential research analysis stage:

Without.....

*Breezes over leaves dried by the autumn sun
touch the green blades of grass.
Patiently we rest to follow the whirls of
the wind jostle another brown leaf high
above the willows.
Look without seeing*

*The rocks splits with the tap of another rock
that falls from above.
It fragments in rectilinear forms that expose
A fissure that appears orange
an oxidation of material decomposing
the brittleness of a once permanent material.
Let's bundle it up and cargo it to our
site to put on display an act of displacement
or perhaps a replacement of the character
that was once there!*

*The rise of the hill on the left supports
large trees providing a pleasant shade
and a vista that leads one on...But wait!
The wind rustles the bamboo and it
whispers the legend of the stones but not
coherently and you can only catch glimpses!
Hear without listening.*

*How can such a young fast growing grass
have these secrets and why are these so sacred?
Perhaps the soil which holds the roots also chats
to the stones that it sits on. These mysteries of
our mother earth need our care for if we
neglect them they will unearth their forces
and catch us blind when things appear right.
Breath without living*

*This bamboo hides from us peeking around the
hill waiting, resting like troops about to
attack yet a peace prevails and wind waves
the stalks of bamboo as if to beckon us to
come and sit and enjoy the changing filtered
light, seducing us with their graceful gestures
and beds of dried leaves that change at the
slightest move. Sleep without resting.
Seek without knowing.
Be without being.*

*Moments of fond memories don't require
the time, not the same time that meets the
warmth of the morning sun each day.
For if we sit here the scent of the dew
will wake the earth and its life within.
Each second is a lifetime when we
breathe like it is our last breath.
Will without wanting.*

- CKO –Jun 04 –

Garden of the Forgotten Rocks



Image 61: *Garden of the Forgotten Rocks* model - plan view

The experience of this garden starts from the hotel lobby and ends at the garden beyond named *Beginning of Water Garden*. A narrative was created describing this experience. It details the journey anticipated. It narrates the expected experience as it is unfolding, without an overview of where it is going or how long it would take. It speaks of the sights, sounds, smells and feelings of the garden with considerations for direct, filtered and peripheral views. It describes patterns, textures, hues of colours, light and shadows, etc. There are recollections from what has already been experienced and brought to the present as a memory that enables parts of the experience to slip from one place to another, perhaps to the next garden or from off-site.

For example, there is the experience of moving from the lobby out to the garden, providing a borrowed strategic vista or *shakkei* that goes beyond the confines of the site to the hills on the horizon; one then experiences moving through a “breaking up” of the garden’s architectural order. This realignment or shifting of forms gives a moment to pause and sit, to observe and perhaps understand; the opening up of the forms reveals rock gravel that has a distinctive orange character of oxidizing metal found within the hills that are being viewed. It is the intention of the client to provide access for the guests to go for a stroll up

to the hills and have a view of the surrounding area and allowing the guests to make a mental connection of the materials from the hills back to the site.⁵³

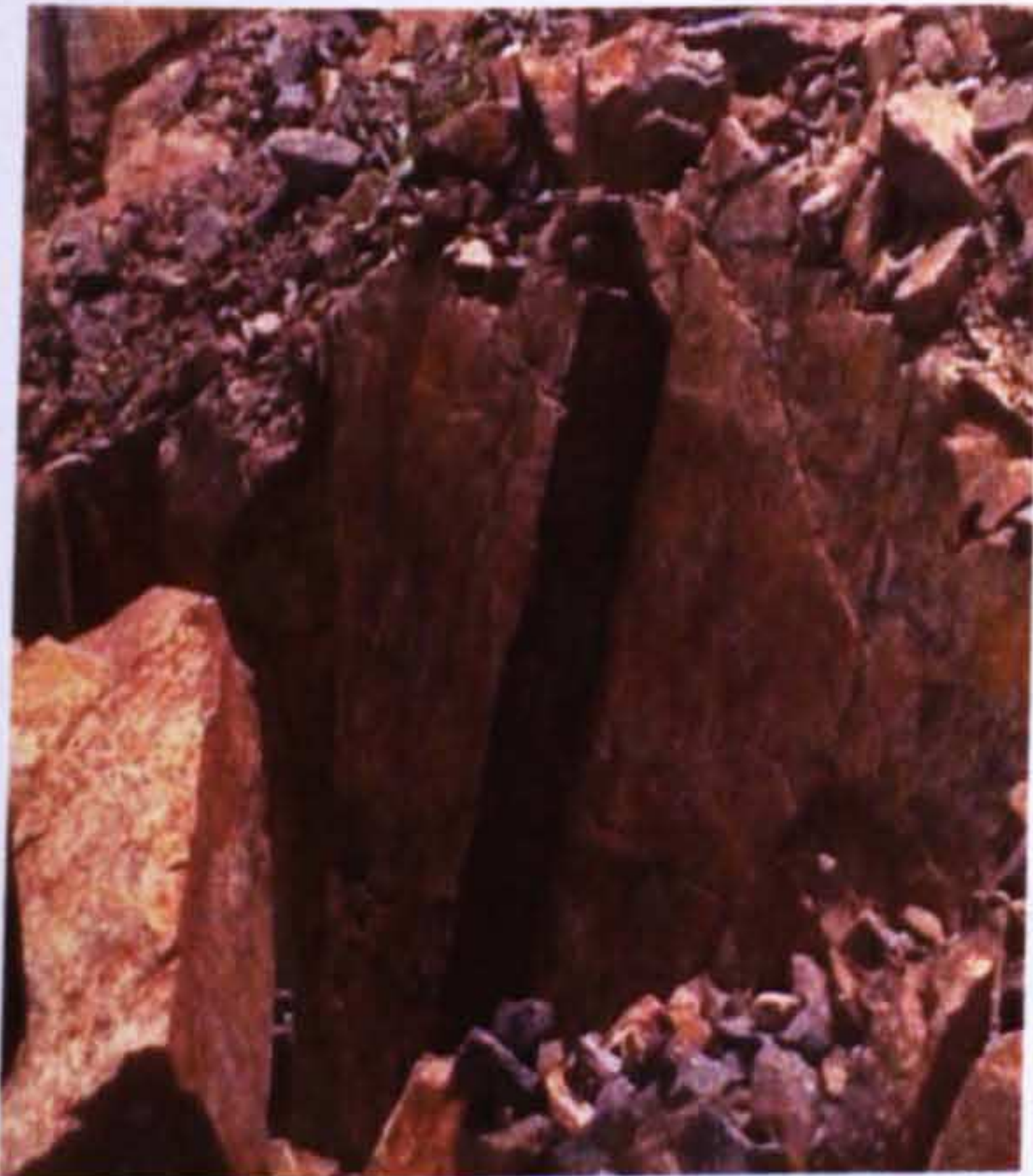


Image 62: Site rock gravel

The other experience explores moving through the traditional “moon gate” 月门 as a gesture of arriving into the garden.⁵⁴ As the intention is to denote the same sense of arrival but only in its essence, the research involves analysing the videoed experience of moving through an actual traditional moon gate.

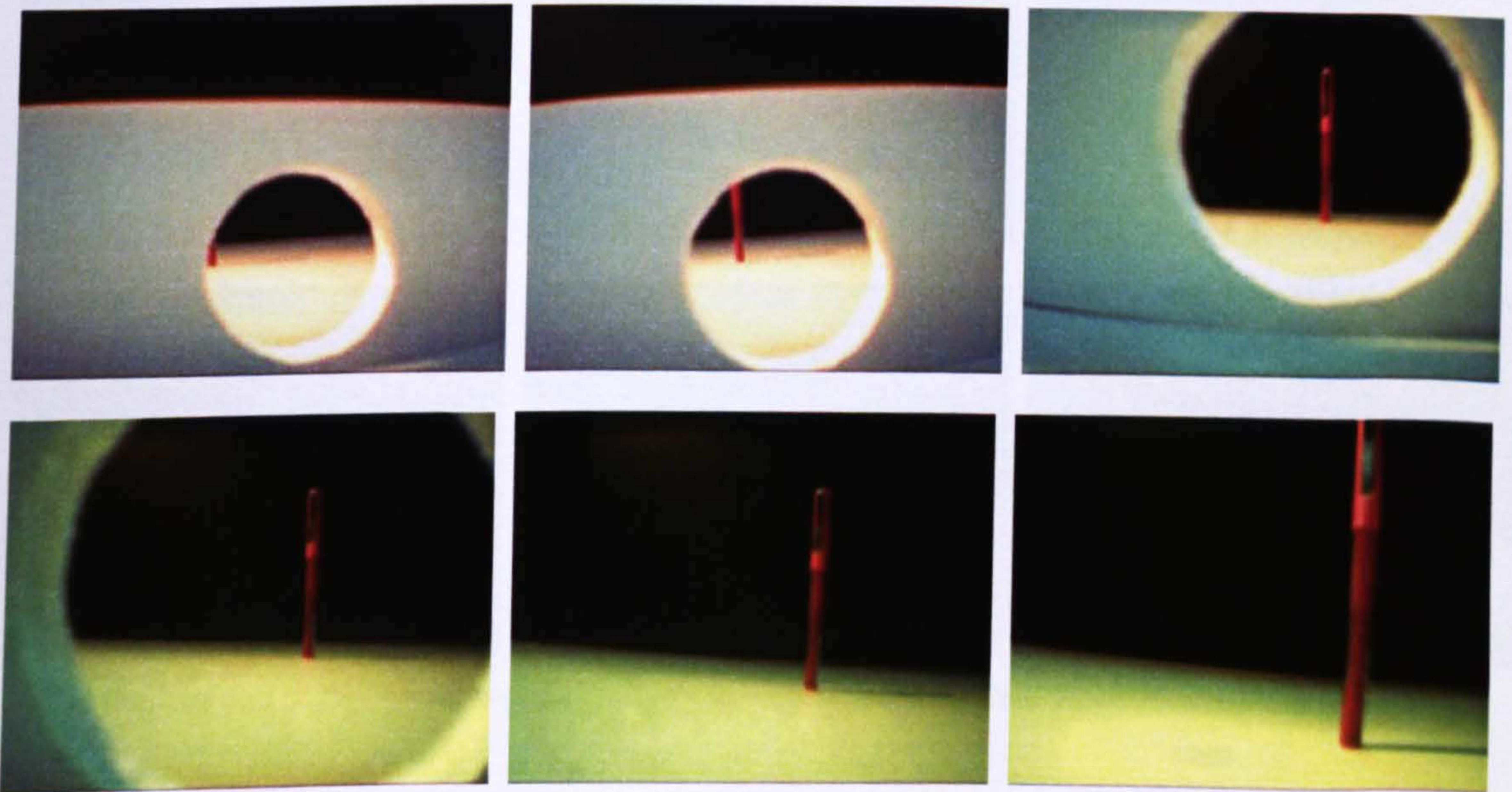


Image 63: Distilled Moon Gate experience (Refer to video from DVD Disk, Appendix 20)

⁵³ The rock gravel is actually from a demolished part of the hill that was excavated to allow for a highway to pass through – another one of man’s intervention on the land.

⁵⁴ Beardsley describes the phenomena of the moon gate as “a space awaiting occupation by various phenomena. As written, the word is composed of the character for “gate” embracing the character for “sun” (originally “moon”): the implication is that of a void – the gate – being filled with the presence of light.” (2005, p. 182)

The research reveals a number of aspects that differentiates it from walking through a typical Western gate. Firstly, due to the fact that the circle has a single low point, only one person at a time can move through the gate. The direct consequence is that each person steps through the moon gate separately, making it necessary to interrupt the conversation that two people moving together may be having. This interruption allows one to fully appreciate on a personal level the significance of one individually relocating oneself from one space to another at exactly the moment of crossing through the moon gate. Secondly, in order to walk through the Moon Gate comfortably, one has to align one's body at an angle of 90° to the gate opening, this happens almost subconsciously. This realignment then brings the viewer on an axis with a focal point set before them in the garden beyond.

The proposed experience explores a series of offset walls with horizontal saw-cut slots in the stone, revealing a view beyond which can only be appreciated when the viewer is perfectly aligned and the slots provide glimpses of the red coloured leaves of the trees beyond. This importance of alignment is similar to the moon gate experience.

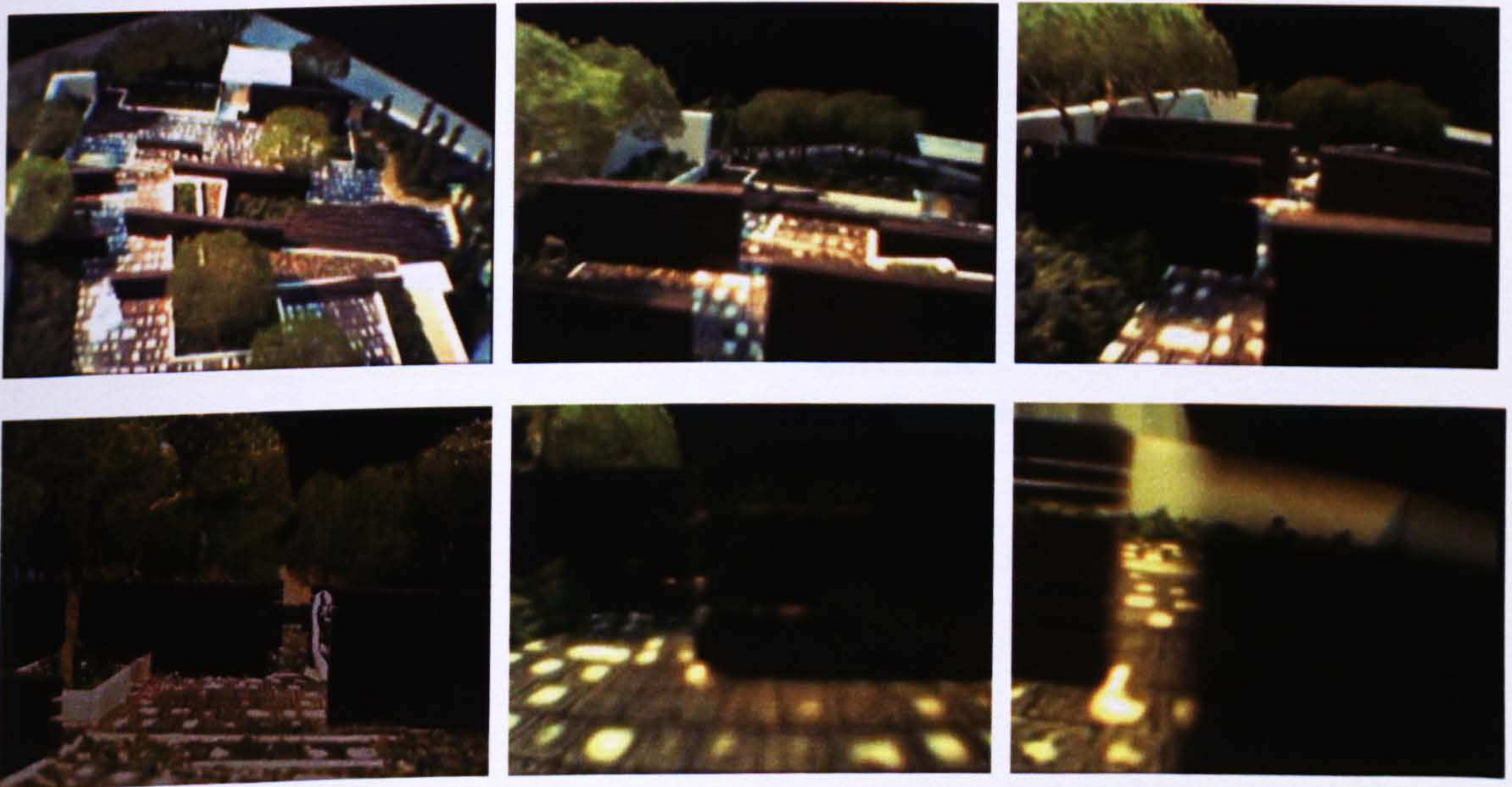


Image 64: *Garden of the Forgotten Rocks* (Refer to video from DVD Disk, Appendix 16)

By offsetting the walls, the experience of the work changes. A couple strolling will likely move around the walls with more ease singularly rather than alongside each other thereby emphasizing a moment of pause allowing the sense of entering to be appreciated individually.

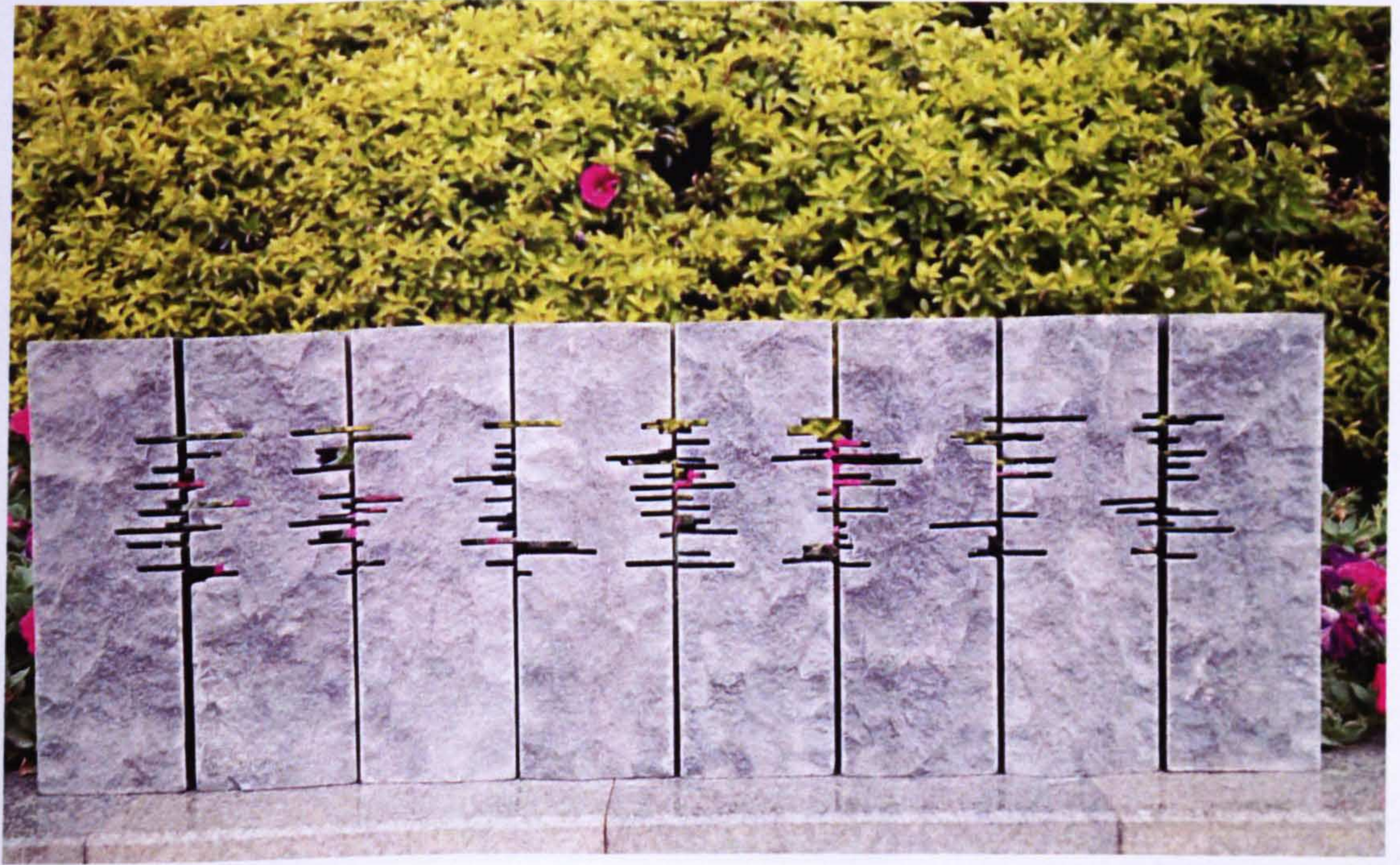


Image 65: Stone mock-up of the *Garden of Forgotten Rocks*



Image 66: Stone mock-up of the *Garden of Forgotten Rocks* (various views)

The Beginning of Water Garden



Image 67: *Beginning of Water Garden*

Manmade grottos of limestone found in the private estates of Southern China were common, particularly during the Sung Dynasty when garden design was being refined as an art form together with tea drinking, poetry writing and painting. The grotto experience is about scale. Relative to the rest of the garden the experience is intimate and sometimes a challenge to get through unscathed, which means one needs to change the normal walking movement to adapt to the limestone configurations.

The Beginning of Water Garden takes the overall form of a Chinese ink painting box which I found in the street markets of Shanghai. The notion of the form of the box being opened in order that a poem could be written using the ink within is reinterpreted to the form being opened in a different manner by fragmenting it into pieces allowing one to go through and up it, like a grotto, to read the poem from the top.



Image 68: Chinese ink painting box

On the cover are inscriptions of Chinese characters outlining a poem. (See Image 68) Although I was not inspired by the poem itself, I was interested in the notion that poetry was historically part of their everyday life during the Sung Dynasty.⁵⁵ By adopting this form at a larger scale, it is not meant to be understood literally as a Chinese ink box. Instead, it is the experience of moving through the forms that is the intention of the work. The *breaking up* of the form into eight pieces with organically shaped surfaces demands that the viewer adapt their normal walking motion to move around the stone forms, thus experience an abstract aspect of a grotto.

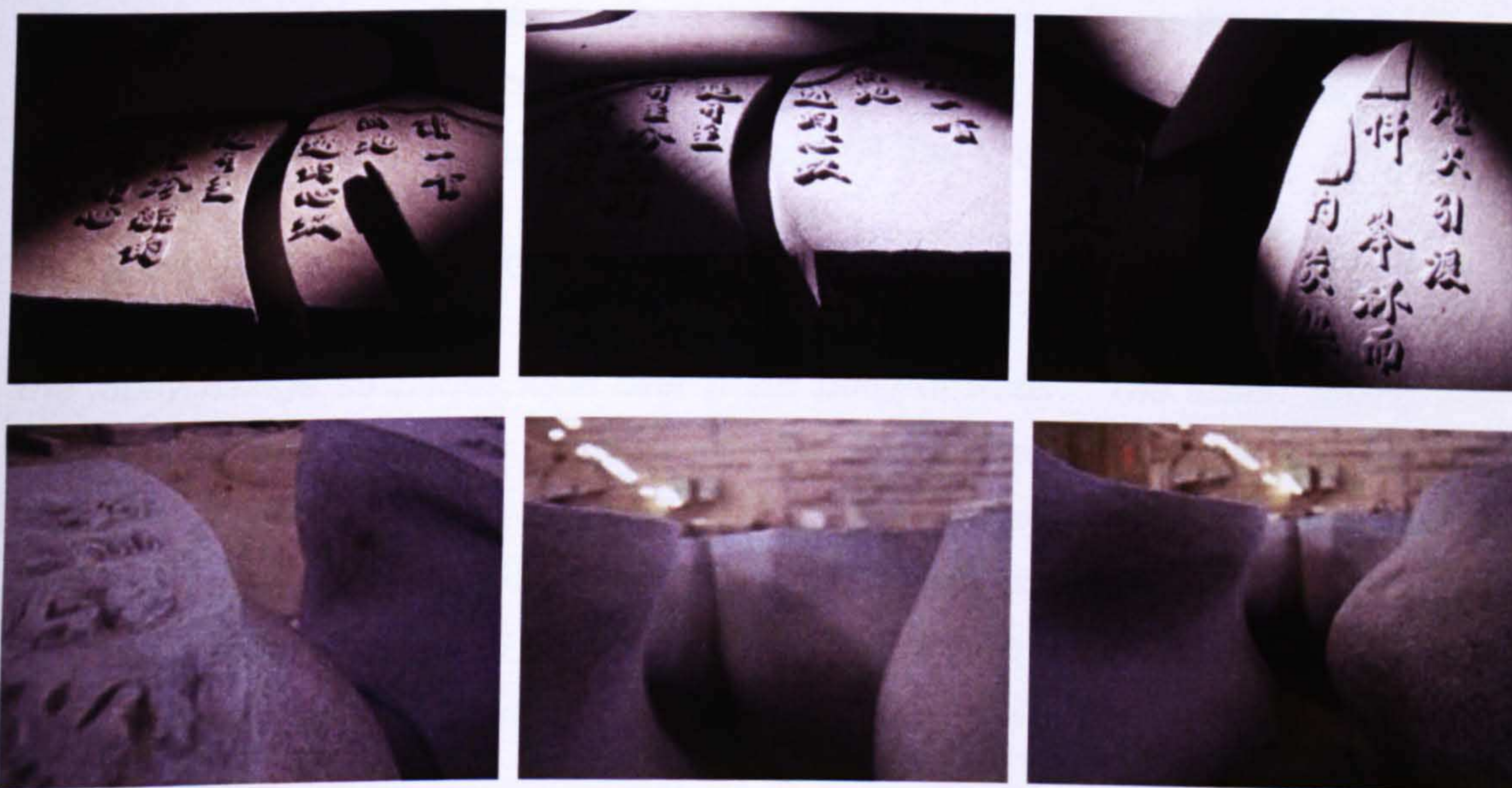


Image 69: Experience moving through abstract grotto. (Refer to video from DVD Disk, Appendix 17)

The forms are however more user friendly than a real grotto, as the edges are smooth and more comfortable to walk around. (See Image 69) The height of the work at the lowest point upon entering is 2.0 meters. As one enters and walks up the slope the stone becomes only 0.4 metres high allowing people to sit on it as a point to pause and reflect. There is a three dimensional effect from the ground level, concealing the overall view of the poetry on the upper surface which can only be understood when standing at the top and having an overview of the poetry. The calligraphy of the poem was done by a Chinese student working in my studio, who translated my research narrative of the experience from the lobby to the actual position where one is standing in the *Beginning of Water Garden*. It is about a journey that ends at that place.

⁵⁵ This is in reference to the everyday life of an administrator or scholar that had the time and resources to enjoy the finer aspects of Chinese culture at that time.

Even though *Art Gardens within a Tea Garden* is not yet constructed it has been included in this research as it demonstrates the value of working with the narrative and model making stages during the research process.

The Experience as a Research Narrative

The following is a narrative account of the experience anticipated of moving through two gardens within *Art Gardens within a Tea Garden*. They are *the Garden of the Forgotten Rocks* and *the Beginning of Water Garden*. It is ideally read together with viewing the video of the model created for each of these two gardens. Since this project is not yet realized, the narrative is written in the third person as it is not my personal account of the experience but what is anticipated. (See Image 64 and Image 67)

“Art Gardens within a Tea Garden”

The lobby lounge suspends itself over a still body of water. The inside setting with its warm colours and a fireplace contrasts with the outside where there is a coolness created by the black reflective water and willow trees. The light and reflections holds the space united as there is plenty of both in each space. The reflections of the bamboo and willow trees are held by the edge of the water. The obvious view beyond is the restaurant but it is softened by a layer of vegetation.

Another reflection is an earth mound that projects out from the water almost spontaneously without hesitation changing the predictability of the space. It creates depth and arouses curiosity as to what lies ahead in the garden below. Tops of trees are visible beyond and on the periphery of one’s view are more willow trees leading one’s eyes out and giving a sense of the infinite.

As one steps down from the lounge and out towards the garden, there is a noticeable sense of departure or disengagement from the hotel. One is then confronted with a planting of bamboo growing through a void created in the bridge as if to mark Nature’s intervention on the architecture, perhaps signifying that one has truly left the safety and comfort of the hotel environment.

“The Garden of the Forgotten Rocks”

Some flowering trees mark the entrance ahead; the sound of trickling water is heard and a partial view beyond allures one. A filtered sight through the vegetation provides a sense of the overview of the garden below but cannot be seen clearly. Upon entering, the way is

not obvious as it turns and descends. The steps down into this garden take one past substantial walls. One may wonder if these walls are the structural foundation of the hotel. Turning to the right one is presented with a series of walls of natural stone. They appear impenetrable at first glance and one wonders if the wrong way has been chosen at this point. However, as one continues to descend down the steps and gets closer to these stone walls it is noticed that there are horizontal slots in the walls. Only when one is on the same level of the walls does the view through these slots align providing a sliver of a view through. It then becomes obvious that the offsetting of the walls will allow one to pass through. The walk is negotiated. Walking between walls means the movement is more of a slithering experience around the ends of the walls and more comfortable for an individual to move through than a couple or group. Each time moving around the ends of these walls one can look up and see through the series of slots. One stops and rests. There is a stone bench to relax with one's back towards the warm stone wall that has retained heat from the morning sun. It is here amongst the walls that the shadows of the trees are on the walls and pathway. The smell of fragrant shrubs is in the air and the sound of trickling water is louder but still soft.

As one continues, more benches are seen with people sitting and relaxing in the morning sun. The final walls present a different view through the slots. It is the red colour from the trees of the Tea Garden, in striking contrast to the dark grey granite that frames it.

Further along there is a stream that is almost dry but still moving. Gravel and small rocks with a distinct rustic orange colour are scattered along the stream. Reaching the other side by stepping stones it is noticeable that the paving is offset. Looking around it is also apparent that the walls too are offset from the garden opposite to the stream, as if there has been a disruption realigning part of the garden. It seems this disruption has revealed the gravel and rocks below that have now turned orange because of the oxidation when exposed to the air and water.

Off to the side of this garden is a small pavilion to rest and take in the view at this new perspective which is lower, more intimate and reinforced with a square opening in the wall to bring a smaller scale experience of viewing beyond. The remaining steps descend randomly, so do the opportunities to sit and relax on the way down. With care one negotiates and descends into 'the Tea Garden'.

"The Tea Garden"

Upon the last step of 'the Garden of the Forgotten Rocks' is a junction where one needs to take stock of the situation and decide. A distant view seems to indicate that the tea pavilions are just beyond the water's edge on the south side. Alternatively one can turn to north and go along the longer way to know more of what the garden has to offer. The water's edge seems so natural to gravitate towards. It seems to have a soft edge like the garden at the lobby lounge. The water is different, with small fish found at varying depths throughout. One turns north.

The route is organic. The pathway weaves away and towards the water's perimeter. With the vegetation obscuring direct views, the experience is almost a 'flirt' with the water's edge. Small hills, as abstract foothills, are topographic forms found on the land and in the water as islands. One's sense of orientation is also obscure and then by surprise there is a diagonal form of a bridge and stepping stones leading to 'the Beginning of Water Garden'. A stone and wood bench appears, one of the same "family" as those found in the Garden of the Forgotten Rocks. There is both a feeling of predictability and unpredictability of what one might see next.

"The Beginning of Water Garden"

Another pavilion appears. Entering it one realizes that it is in fact on the edge of 'the Beginning of Water Garden'. The open texture of the trees creates a different lighting on the path, distinguishing itself from the rest of 'the Tea Garden'. Moving closer one notices that there are walls on each side defining a type of entrance or transition from one space to another. Walking through is intimate as only one person can move through at a time. The movement requires negotiation because the body needs to align and conform to the alignment of the stone forms like entering an abstract grotto. Along the edges of these monolithic forms is a crease of water that also conforms to the stones edge. The water is moving swiftly, channelling, but shallow and fresh. It looks ephemeral in nature as if it is intermittent and could cease at any time. It gurgles, splashes and surfs purposefully, spilling over the edges onto the gravelled ramp. One senses a strong source.

As one proceeds up the two meter raise of the ramp one is aware of the close proximity to the stone surfaces on each side which are smooth and inviting to touch. By walking upwards, the body slowly rises higher and higher in relation to the sides of these massive stones. Eventually one reaches the top and the stone is only 400mm high, an appropriate height to sit and rest. It is here that one can see how the pieces of stone fit together like a

puzzle. It is also here, at this highest point, one notices that there are Chinese characters, a script of calligraphy that is visually engaging. The characters are embossed on the stone instead of carved into it and tells a story of the journey that the reader has just experienced. It describes how one had already arrived at this location from the lobby. One can only read the poem in fragments and needs to mentally fit together the pieces to understand the whole. This reading and turning to see the other pieces, remembering what they read and the repetition of needing to turn back again and reread parts to understand it is partly a performance by the reader.

As one is reading the story of the journey from the lobby to 'the Beginning of Water Garden' it raises an obvious question: If this is the title of this work then where is the actual beginning of the water. Moving away and returning to 'the Tea Garden' one recollects the source of water was not where one would expect it to be, at the highest point, but instead is mysteriously unanswered, hidden but perhaps coming from the stones themselves.

Post Reflective Thoughts

The concept of *Art Garden within a Tea Garden* strongly relates to how larger scale spaces would traditionally have been addressed with a critical analysis of the garden's cultural and historical context. In each of the gardens there is an abstracted interpretation of the experience that draws upon a relevant experience of the region in which the work is located. There have been conscious ways in which the importance of place has been fundamental to the process and outcome.

The factual and experiential research analysis stages were exhausting and in hindsight could have been shortened if I was more careful in the utilization of my time. For example, I could have identified an even narrower historic timeframe than generally stating Sung Dynasty. Another more efficient way of using my research time would have been to search out relevant places and experiences of contemplation that already exist and concentrate on them rather than reviewing and documenting so many other experiences. Each of these lessons has proved beneficial for my current and future projects and has enabled me to focus on more important and useful things.

The outcome of the works in narrative and model form can be analysed based on their success as *contemplative places*. *Garden of the Forgotten Rocks* has a strong reference back to its geological place with the actual stone from the surrounding hills retained and

installed into the work giving credence to its title by portraying rocks that have been overlooked or forgotten.

The other strength of the work is the attempt to reinterpret the 'moon gate' entrance experience. My question is: Does it provide a meaningful sense of calm? Does it represent the essence of a moon gate in an abstract sense? In my opinion the 'moon gate' experience is a good attempt at best. As an elongated experience of walls it lacks the 'moment-ness' of transition that a moon gate affords. The transition by contrast is vague, unclear and less determined in terms of defining space. Furthermore, the work does not define the spatial experience of moving from one garden to another but between two parts of the same garden.

In hindsight, I question the specific cultural relevancy of the moon gate experience. It is an iconic form used throughout China and over thousands of years in garden history. Although culturally relevant, it may not be specific enough to be considered critical for it is not an experience that is specific to Beilun, the region or the Sung Dynasty period.

Garden of the Forgotten Rocks has contemplative qualities. By stretching out the moon gate experience over a longer period of time, there is a longer pause of being alone where one could appreciate the significance of the view through the slots of stone. At some point of time, even for a moment, a realization of the partial views to the other side perhaps intrigues the viewer to question where one is heading. This sense of inquisition could come as a phenomenological disclosure; by realizing something that is beyond the walls one could question that the work is also beyond what it is on the surface. The chance to sit on benches within the work provides the opportunity to reflect on the experience and draw one's own conclusions.

***Holding in Place*, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia**



Image 70: *Holding in Place*, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Malaysia is considered as a key Asian country because of its business and culture within the region. It is predominantly Muslim but a large percentage of the business community, including my client, are Chinese. Property development in various sectors has been prolific in the country for the past seven to eight years. Although progressive in her ambitions there is a genuine interest in my client to seek out a difference in the design through its unique location.

The site is an existing hotel situated on Jalan Ampang, one of the most prominent districts and busiest streets in the capital city of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The location is considered prime office and hotel real estate for the country and is situated across from the *Petronas Towers*, which stood as the tallest building in the world from 1996-2003.

It is uniquely situated between two polar opposite extremes when considering uses. On one side is a well-patronized night club called “*Zouk*” and on the other side is one of the most historic and well known cemeteries in the city called *Tanah Perkuburan Islam Jalan Ampang*.

The client is the managing director of her family owned company. She grew up on this property when the family house was located next to the cemetery; prior to the board's decision to develop the land into a hotel. Superstition with regards to the negative impact of being in close proximity to a cemetery has never been an issue with the client. As she put it "I grew up beside it all my life, and never had a problem". For this client her impartial attitude towards the site's proximity to the cemetery was a unique opportunity.



Image 71: Location map

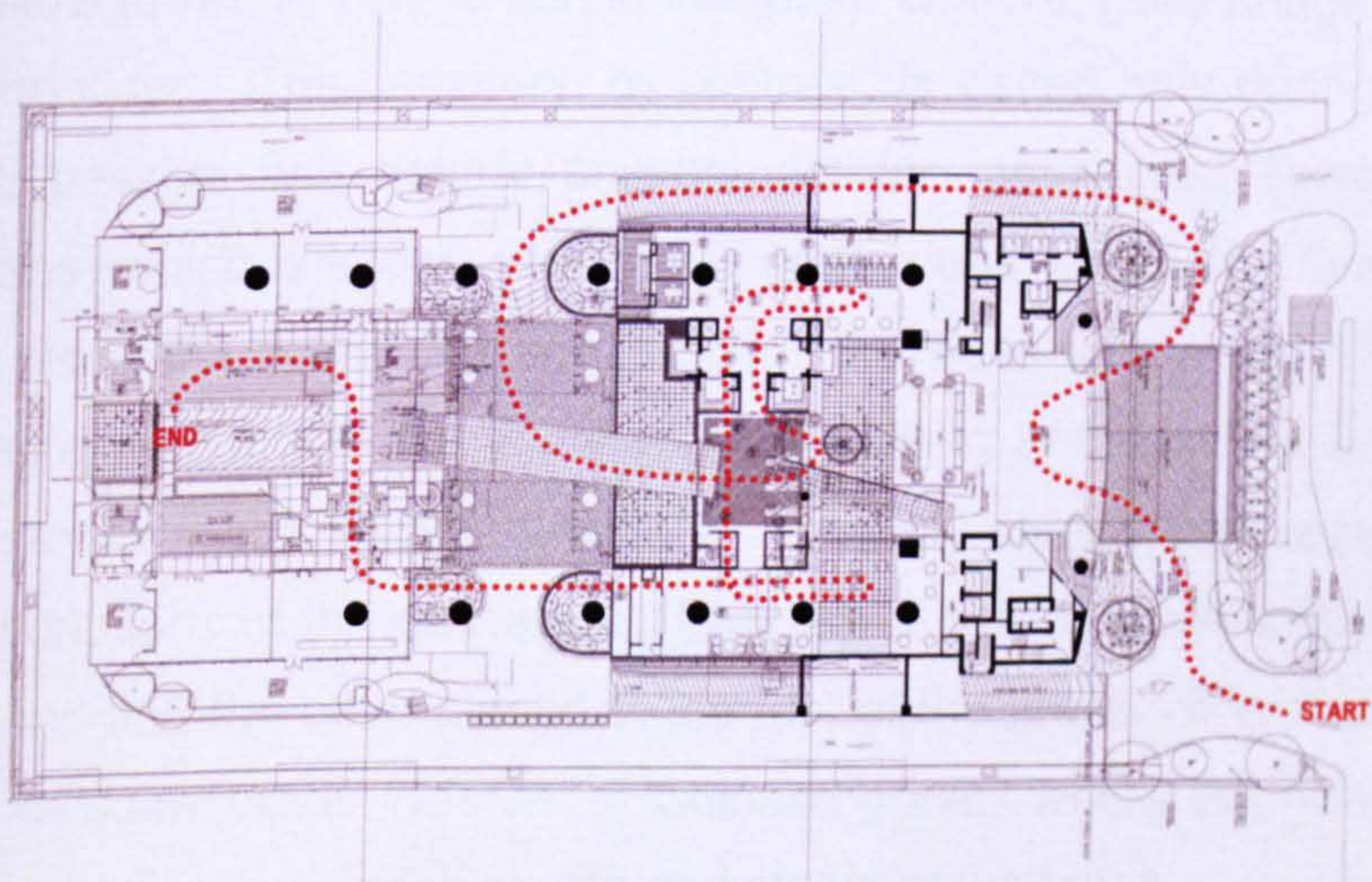


Image 72: *Holding in Place*, Kuala Lumpur - Site Plan (Refer to PowerPoint Show and video from DVD Disk – Appendix 21 and Appendix 26, respectively)
Red dots indicate flow of movement

The architect who designed the four-star hotel fifteen years ago is involved in the project again. His new brief is to convert the existing hotel into a five-star boutique hotel on the

condition that the existing structure of the hotel could not be altered. Interestingly, the original hotel had been designed with a void through its centre, spatially connecting a busy street to the cemetery. With the *Zouk* disco across the street and its high-tech façade lighting with changing colours, it seems to represent “life,” as in the nightlife of the city. In contrast, on the opposite side of the site was the cemetery that no one visits at night. Figuratively speaking, the hotel is between a place of life (*Zouk*) and a place of death (cemetery) - a type of purgatory. (See Image 73 and Image 74)



Image 73: *Tanah Perkuburan Islam*, Kuala Lumpur



Image 74: *Zouk Disco*, Kuala Lumpur

I spent time to go to both, *Zouk* and the cemetery. *Zouk* is one of the most renowned night club establishments within Asia. It is a popular venue for young professionals and typically there is a long queue to enter every night. The most notable aspect of its view from the street is the façade lighting with changing colours that rotate from blue to green to yellow to red to pink to purple and other colours. (See Image 75) It could not possibly go unnoticed. The cemetery, by contrast, is visited only during the day time and was a quiet, passive and natural environment for the sacred Tembusu trees (sp. *Fagraea fragrans*) which is known for its slow growth and longevity. One of these trees could be seen from the swimming pool void of the hotel where my work is located. What is interesting to note is the experience of walking amongst the small physical scale of the tombstones in the Muslim cemetery. Typically, they appear more like markers that have no inscriptions of the deceased. They are a pair of small knob like forms, one placed at the head and the other placed at the foot of the grave. It is a humble gesture, unlike the scale of some of the Western or Chinese graves where the size and the materials of the tombstones represent the wealth and status of the family.

My proposal was simple but radical. I suggested to the architect and client that we accept and signify our unusual location between a cemetery and the nightclub by contrasting the issues of life and death through the art, architecture and landscape. The argument is that life is best expressed by its proximity to death.



Image 75: *Zouk* at Night (Refer to video from DVD Disk, Appendix 23)

I first recommended that we should build upon the “life aspects” in the interior and exterior environments with more light, more planting and more water - all elements strongly associated with life in the Chinese culture. My next suggestion was to create a recognition or observance of this sustained life through the creation of an abstract vigil – a nocturnal devotion of sorts.



Image 76: Casket Enclosures

The details of the next proposal dealt with the large architectural voids that made the hotel feel impersonal. As the brief was to transform this building into a boutique hotel, I felt that scale was critical, and therefore, introduced smaller scale spatial rectangular enclosures

that represented caskets. (See Image 76) In fact, they were more like open cages made of bamboo but provided the sense of enclosure and intimacy of scale in some of the key areas of the hotel. These proposals were presented and surprisingly agreed with, receiving no adverse comments.



Image 77: *Holding in Place* Scale Model, Kuala Lumpur (Refer to video from DVD Disk, Appendix 24)

A series of studies⁵⁶ were carried out in model form and used to research the experience together with the miniature camera videos. (See Image 77) The experimentation on the physical works started with a mock up study for developing a “water candle” for the effect of a vigil where the notion of a flame was abstracted through the use of water and light. The intent was to develop a fibre optic light working together with bubbling water to produce enough variations, simulating the flicker of a flame. Both day and night effects were reviewed. (See Image 78)

Holding in Place is a composition of three elements: a field of reflective water - 10mm thick on a black granite surface with 115 “water candles” combined with 115 glass forms. The glass is a series of small organic forms used in contrast to the scale of the space and the vastness of the water field. (See Image 79) They are cast using the imprints of the hands of the longest serving staff of the hotel. (See Image 80)

⁵⁶ Refer to PowerPoint Show from DVD Disk, Appendix 21 - *Holding in Place*, Kuala Lumpur and Appendix 22 - *Holding in Place*, Landscape Concept Design Report.

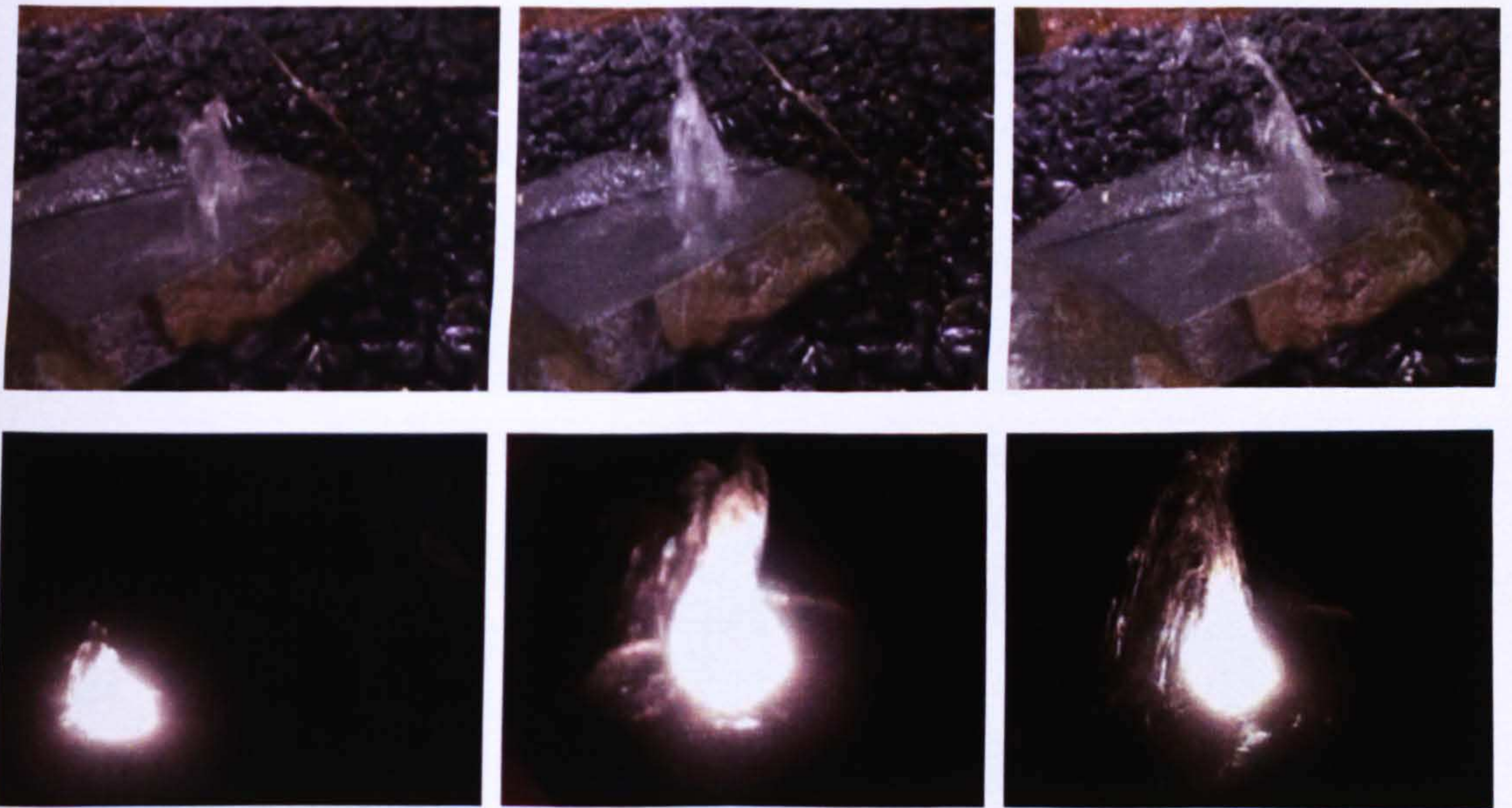


Image 78: *Water Candle, Holding in Place* (Refer to video from DVD Disk, Appendix 25)

A hand was chosen because it was a natural form that strongly associated itself with service and hospitality. It was also hoped that by using something unusual and unexpected, it would raise some appropriate questioning. The hand and particularly the imprint of the hand, as a negative impression meant that the positive form of the hand was not visible. In the Asian context of the hospitality industry, the best service is what is referred to as “the invisible hand”; representing the notion that the best service is neither seen nor heard, but magically appears when a need for service arises. This “invisible hand” is synonymous with discrete service.



Image 79: *Holding in Place, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia* (Refer to video from DVD Disk, Appendix 26)



Image 80: *The Invisible Hand, Holding in Place*

The 115 pieces of glass and water candles are placed at three different locations within the hotel. My original intention was to cast the hand of every employee of the hotel. However, due to budget constraints, I was only able to cast a limited number of people, and therefore decided to have the management choose only four from the longest serving staff of the hotel.⁵⁷

The Experience

From the busy road of Jalan Ampang, I am relieved to be leaving the street and entering into a space that is differentiated from the outside with a solid wall reinforced with trees, shrubs and grass planting. I stop to see the natural grasses that look soft and casual in such an urban context and I realize that although they look strange to be in the city they seem appropriate perhaps because they are so well maintained. A fleeting thought is that perhaps the use of grasses was influenced by Noguchi's *Forest Walk* in *California Scenario*. The light sound of cascading water is heard before I experience the full visual impact of the water feature. It is a long form of fitting gesture in scale with the space. The white water set against the black granite unfolds as one gets closer to the entrance of the hotel and it is this experience that seems to make one willing to walk to the arrival plaza but then turn back to get the full effect. There is a feeling of spaciousness and I pause to

⁵⁷ The quantity of *four* was chosen because the Chinese believe that the pronunciation of the number "4" is the same as "death" and therefore is typically avoided but since the work was to acknowledge death, the number *four* in this instance seemed appropriate.

take in the whole view and become conscious that the sound of the water does mask the sound of the traffic although one is still aware of the street beyond. But the difference now is that the traffic is not disturbing and I have a settled feeling of being safe in the hotel environment although I have not yet entered the building.

But rather than enter as a pedestrian, I choose to move through the porte-cochere and turn left to go up the long ramp that a vehicle would take to enter the motorcade court at the second floor. It is a steep climb and the focus is not viewing from a passenger's perspective but as a walker facing the pavement in front of me. The bamboo planting gives some relief from this architectural ramp. There is a sense of being elevated and the canopies of the trees over the car park below come into view, which is a pleasant reward for the journey. As I turn again to the left the space opens up to the motorcade and the scale is urban and immense. Trees help to bring down the scale as well as the structural *trunks* that are supporting the transfer beam of the upper floors. What then comes into my view is the reflective black granite water terrace appearing as a type of welcoming mat with the glass sculptures but no water. It is turned off for maintenance! The lights are changing colour but there is no flame effect without the water. I am dismayed and walk through to the casket enclosure of the lobby.

Proceeding into the coffer form of the lobby the feeling of human scale is more comforting than outside. Entering the space I venture to the staircase that looks down into the open restaurants below. I am relieved to see the water is operating there and proceed down the circular staircase. As I am near the bottom of this Richard Serra type staircase made of rusted corton steel, I need to turn around to view the work. The water is bubbling and the water candles look alive. They seem to twinkle with the variation of light caused by the moving water. It intrigues me. The water connection to the water wall visually works with the patterned cascade, giving an optical sensation without sound. I return my focus on the reflecting pool and feel the work brings a certain gaiety to the space almost demanding too much attention. Being small but intense and in a large quantity seems to give *Holding in Place* substantial visual weight to the view from the two restaurants.

I move to the elevator and go up to the spa pool level to continue my recording. At the third level the walk is rather indirect through various corridors to the pool area. My first feeling of arrival was the sense of the bamboo casket enclosures that once again appear. It has an Asian feel and the sense of enclosure is intimate and inviting. I enter. The pool itself is like many others but at the far end I can see the architectural void that opens to the large Tembusu tree beyond. The framing emphasizes the viewer's position relative to

the tree. The foreground of the raised reflecting pool that then cascades down to the spa pool provides better reflections at this level. At this height, I am looking into and through the glass instead of looking down on it. The natural light beyond seems to bring out the clarity of the glass and the water then looks more like a turbine with a circular motion within it. It is a very visual effect and as I step across the stepping stones next to the cascade my view is closer. The imprint of the hand is more obvious here where one is at eye level with the work. The moving water seems to distract or distort the image from being too literal and yet once understood is easy to understand. As I depart I take a final glance back and feel quietness in my mind.

Post Reflective Thoughts

Holding in Place is quiet. The spaces are differentiated from the outside environment of the urban streetscape so a relative calm prevails and is created through the architecture, landscape planting, water features and the art work. It is the collective effort of all disciplines of architecture, landscape architecture, interior design and art that makes the differentiation so strong and the peaceful atmosphere so effective. Specific areas of pause are experienced while moving through the work and serious moments of reflection are feasible to the individual if he/she chooses to do so. There is a sense that one should slow down and observe the phenomena that they are experiencing.

Only upon reflection, while writing this portion of my research, it occurred to me that the contemplative experience of walking through the cemetery was analogous to the experience of my work. It is the scale of the work that is similar. The glass was of a similar size and in some instances shape as those found as markers in the cemetery. In both experiences of moving through the cemetery and moving through the work, there is a sense of and an appreciation for smaller scaled understated markers, which are close to the ground, with an unassuming simple gesture indicating a place of rest or pause.

As the works are located in three different locations there is a sense that *Holding in Place* could be re-titled as *Holding in Three Places* as it feels fragmented and disjointed. Each location has the viewer moving through, along and around the work at different heights in relation to the viewer. In some cases it is from far overhead, and in others it is up close at eye level allowing a closer inspection of the hand imprinted detail in the glass. This variety of experiences provides different opportunities of having insights of the work.

In hindsight the field of reflective water in each location should have been larger in comparison with the scale of the space to let the work breathe space and bring a stronger

sense of contemplative pause to the viewer. This would have strengthened the feeling of simplicity and perhaps given the work a more powerfully quiet effect.

Although considerable care is taken to ensure that the restaurant space is differentiated from the outside traffic and city environment, the experience of the interior space of the restaurant does not have a sense of relative calm. Visual and acoustical distractions with the serving and eating activities could have been subtly screened and buffered thereby further differentiated the space of the work with the space of the restaurant.

The experience of looking down on *Holding in Place* from the lobby level is perhaps more powerful. From this higher vantage point the distractions of the restaurant and the diners are not as noticeable and therefore the work reads clearer and more complete. The composition is also more fully understood and the effect of the changing lights is more engaging.

The moulded impression of the hand in glass combined with the water candle is effective as sculptural elements holding their own integrity as an art form. Collectively these pieces create an implied horizontal plane that reinforces the effect of the recessive and horizontal character of the black reflective pool, all of which induces a sense of calm and peacefulness.

Survey Results

A survey was conducted and videoed; both individually and as small groups on an informal basis. The interview format was through conversation which was prompted with non-leading questions. The ethical survey forms were appended with an outline of my research topic but the participants only read the outline after the survey was completed so that they would not be influenced by my research topic.

The survey group comprised of a total of twelve participants. Eight guests were Singaporeans trained as architects staying at the hotel as a group, two were Malaysians working at the hotel and two were public relation managers staying at the hotel from South Africa.



Image 81: Survey Interview (Refer to video from DVD Disk, Appendix 27)

As expected the participants with an architectural background were more forthcoming with their comments as their perception of space was more acute with respect to their environment and they generally communicated and expressed their feelings and experiences more articulately. (See Image 81)

The results of the survey showed that each of the participants enjoyed the experience and would like to return if they had the opportunity. Many expressed that the hotel was unique compared to other five star hotels, which seemed more predictable in their experience. There was a general consensus that a sense of calm and peacefulness prevailed throughout the hotel, particularly as it contrasted with its context of being in a hectic city and located on the busy street of Jalan Ampang. Only one of the participants felt contrary to the group and said she felt strongly that the hotel “rocks” particularly, since the glass sculptures changed colours.

There were a few participants who questioned the nature of the water candle and sculpted glass work. They found the glass intriguing and questioned it when first viewing it. The rest admitted only questioning it, after thinking about it again. There was a general sense of curiosity about the forms, although for some of the participants it only registered as a light element. Only one understood it as a water candle and its relevancy to the context of the cemetery. No one made the connection of the works being an abstracted vigil.

The glass aspect of the work was conveyed as looking like everything from mannequins, torsos, ice sculptures, penguins and garden gnomes. The survey revealed that, the

nature of their comments generally focused on the objects rather than the experience of the overall composition.

There was one participant that indicated he had experienced thinking about things out of his normal day-to-day concerns and that the work reminded him of his childhood days of growing up in a garden court home. He found the work contemplative and stated it as such.

Informally on a number of occasions I have personally approached guests that looked intrigued and asked them what their thoughts were about the work. The glass was always the point of wonder and questions as revealed in the survey. On several occasions, I have seen people squat down curiously looking and pointing at the glass and water candle. When I approached them, they indicated that they were wondering how it worked and what it was. I have seen and approached others whom I saw were video recording and/or photographing the work particularly the glass elements as they were quite unusual looking. One discussion with an Australian couple went on for over a half an hour, regarding how it reminded them of *Ryoanji Garden* in Kyoto, Japan, as they had lived in Japan for twelve years. Unfortunately, I did not have my recorder at that time. This particular comment caught me a bit off guard. On one hand it is one of the best testimonies to have if one were to determine if the work induces a contemplative experience but on the other hand the analogy is one of Japan and not of its *place* here in Malaysia. After explaining to them my original intentions they were grateful but indicated to me that they had never been to the Malay cemetery at the back of the property or any Malay cemetery for that matter. As earlier determined, *place* is defined in many instances by what the viewer brought with them and their past experiences (in Japan) that defined their relationship with the work. Perhaps their insights would be different if they came back to the hotel over a period of several visits and had an opportunity to experience a walk through the Malay cemetery?

My original intention was to have only blue colour for the water candles as I found that particular blue colour to be the most calming to look at. However within one month of the hotel opening, the management changed the lighting to be a series of rotating colours rather than maintaining only the blue colour. I questioned the general manager as to their reason and he said the guests found the spaces "too sombre". During the survey, one of the participants made the association of the changing colours of the water candles as being lively; it occurred to me then, the changing colours locates *Holding in Place* with reference to *Zouk's* as their façade also changes the same colours. This illustrates the

potential conflict that an artist could face where the need to locate the work and have it be place-specific may run counter to the contemplative nature one is trying to achieve.

It is evident from the survey that the comprehensive understanding of the work was not acknowledged for most of those surveyed as many of them had only visited the hotel for the first time. It is also apparent that *Holding in Place* takes time for its full depth to be understood and that this could not be achieved within a single visit for the average guest or visitor. It will be the repeating guest that is able to build a stronger relationship with the work and appreciates over time the references to its context.

I believe that *Holding in Place* has a meaningful sense of calm throughout a majority of the locations. The simplicity of the work is memorable. The unfamiliar shapes of the glass and the unusual use of the water to create the candle effect engages the viewer to spend more time understanding it and for some to figure out its complexity. What is evident in the survey is that the work has made people wonder and has offered deeper experiences for those that took the time to engage and question the work.

Stone Traces, Cluny Hill, Singapore



Image 82: *Stone Traces*, Cluny Hill, Singapore

Singapore is a city state of only 3 million citizens and has had a Garden City policy since 1965. Through deliberate and meticulous effort a lush green environment emerges, achieving their goal of creating 'a city within a garden'. The National Parks Board enhances this image through a rigorous street planting program and develops various parks within the country. One of the most distinguished and oldest parks is the *Singapore Botanical Gardens* which is not only a place of botanical research and education but also popular for visitors to Singapore as it is considered one of the best managed botanical gardens within Asia. For the community around the gardens, including this case study, the *Singapore Botanical Gardens* is a place of immense value for recreating and exercising.

The location of *Stone Traces* is on a rise referred to as Cluny Hill. It is a hillside property that overlooks the *Singapore Botanical Gardens*. As the land is steep, the natural topography was a serious consideration regarding an appropriate attitude towards the relationship of the architecture and the land. Achieving the correct attitude was critical as this would then influence to a large extent the landscape and artwork. Whether the intervention on the land was to be architectural, landscape or artistic it needed to be sympathetic with the environment, allowing it to follow the land, acknowledging the original slope of the terrain and optimizing the panoramic views to the botanical gardens.



Image 83: Panoramic view of the *Singapore Botanical Garden*

The architecture is a series of cascading terraces overtly Modern and contemporary in detailing. A clear expression of calm and repose runs throughout the architectural vocabulary of the design with the overall composition of simple rectilinear geometry.

The clients are Singaporean Chinese, a professional couple who believe in the Chinese geomancy referred to as Feng Shui. Feng Shui determines the orientation of spaces as it relates to the five elements of water, fire, metal, earth and wood, and is affected by the birth date and time of the owners of the home. At the onset and only for preliminary consultation, they commissioned, Feng Shui Master Tan to evaluate and recommend particular elements that would be deemed appropriate so that it may bring safety, prosperity and happiness to them and their children. Prior to my commencement, a list of all the Feng Shui recommendations was presented to me by Master Tan, both verbally, as well as, in writing. (See Image 84)

His requirements were simple and direct. A 'mountain' form was vital at the back of the property with water flowing diagonally towards the house. Stone boulders were crucial in three locations along the west side of the house. Water was essential at the front east side of the property. There were also a number of issues with regards to the plant colours, forms, quantities and locations.

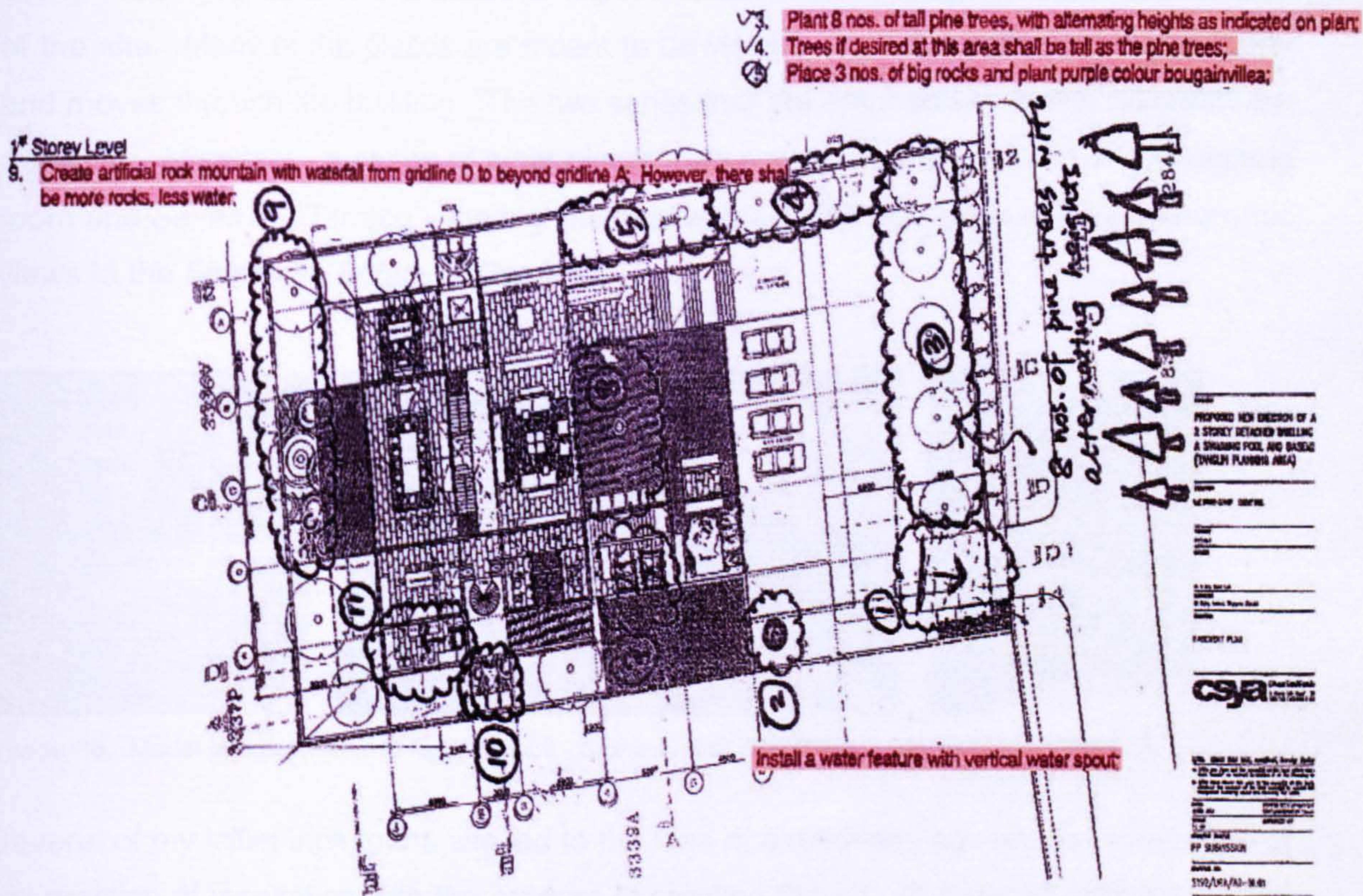


Image 84: Feng Shui Consultant's Recommendations (Refer to PowerPoint Show from DVD Disk, Appendix 31)

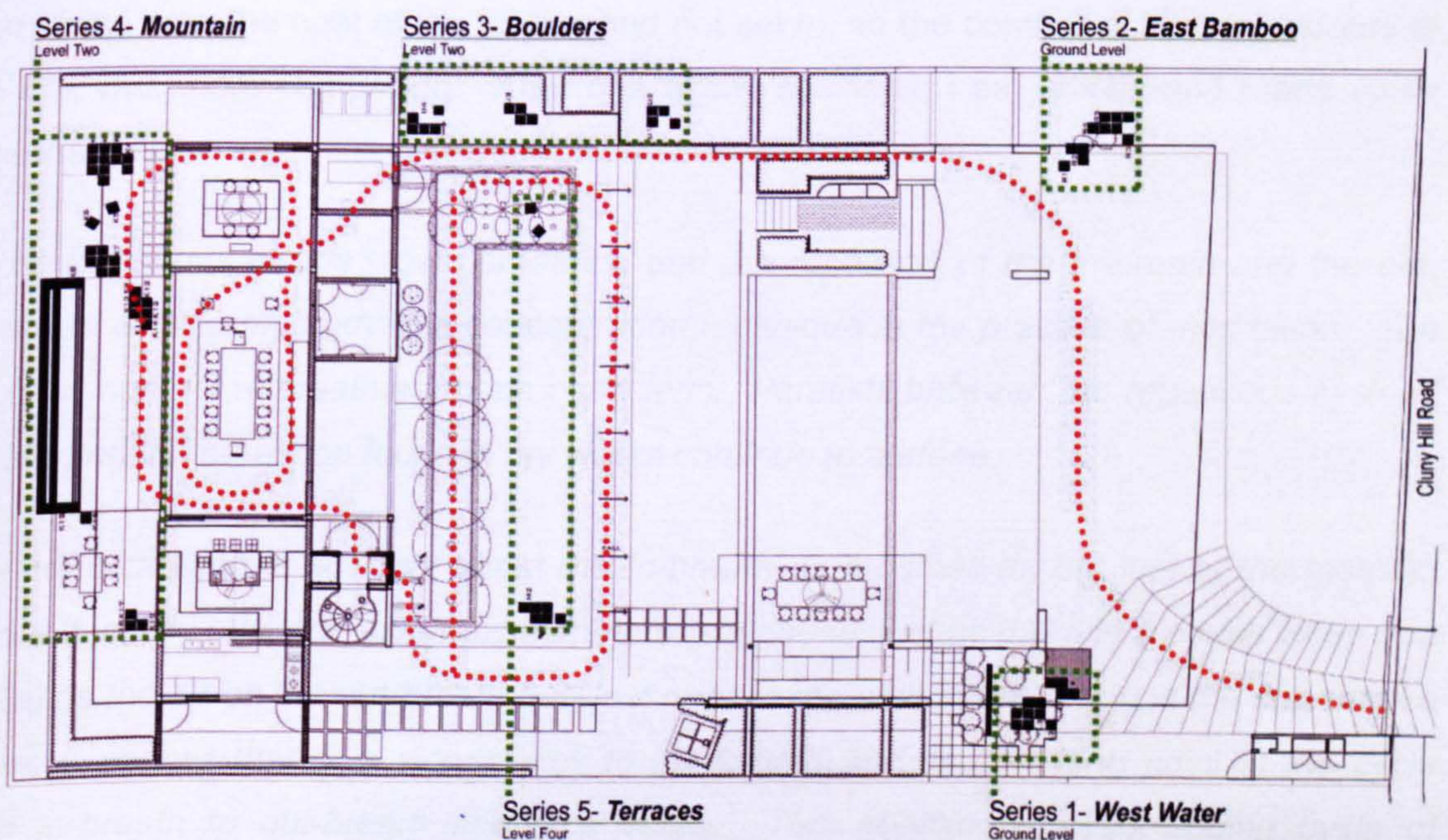


Image 85 : Stone Traces, Cluny Hill, Singapore - Site Plan (Refer to PowerPoint Show from DVD Disk, Appendix 28)
Red dots indicate flow of path; green dots indicate location of Stone Traces

Stone Traces consists of five series of eighteen pieces in five locations on different levels of the site. Many of the pieces are meant to be viewed as one arrives onto the property and moves through the building. The two series that are emphasised in this research are *Series 4 - Mountain* - a series of eight pieces with a water feature outside of the dining room and *Series 5 - Terrace* - the highest floor with a meditation room offering panoramic views to the *Singapore Botanical Gardens*.



Image 86: Model images (Refer to Appendix 29 - *Stone Traces*, Landscape Model Design Report)

Several of my initial trips to the site led to the idea of experimenting with the integration of my practice of meditation with the process of creating the art. In order to do this I started with meditation in the early mornings when the construction activities on the site had not yet commenced. Fortunately, the project was located less than a two-minute drive from where I lived, so it provided the perfect opportunity to visit on the way to my studio. At this time of the day, the heat of the tropics had not set in, so the comfort of sitting outdoors at the site was more compelling. After one of my sessions, I sat quietly and made some personal notes:

To be conscious of one's own breathing and the repetition of the in-breath and the out-breath of air into my body is a concentration technique in my practice of meditation. The unconscious act of breathing made conscious. Parallels between the repetitious cycle of breath and the repetition found in my works continue to surface.

The concentration is not only about the in-breath as it comes in, but just at the moment before it is fully released as an exhale; there is a pause, just as there is a pause when one exhausts the air on the out-breath but just prior to the next in-breath. It is the importance of these pauses that give significance to the breath and its changing point in the cycle from in-breath to out-breath and vice versa. This seemingly, never-ending cycle of breathing creates a notion that things are without end, without a finite edge of where something finishes or begins, giving the feeling that everything continues, nothing is finished and nothing is permanent.

The work itself is a topographic expression of a slope done in stone. The stone is sawn-cut into various rectilinear forms, polished on the sides and profiled on the top with a split faced finish. The last intervention on the stone is a series of saw-cut grooves of 60mm width in a grid configuration. It appears as a type of topographical mapping that is embedded into the stone.

The pieces are then arranged within the space in a fragmented composition whereby no single piece of stone is complete but appears to extend to the next piece through proximity, orientation and the profiling of the split faced finish top.

The Experience

To reach Cluny Hill requires one to walk along the border of the *Singapore Botanical Gardens*. Here the feeling of vegetation is apparent. It is a shaded road from the mature trees overhead and the sound of the cicada is evident. This particular stretch of road is a lush environment.

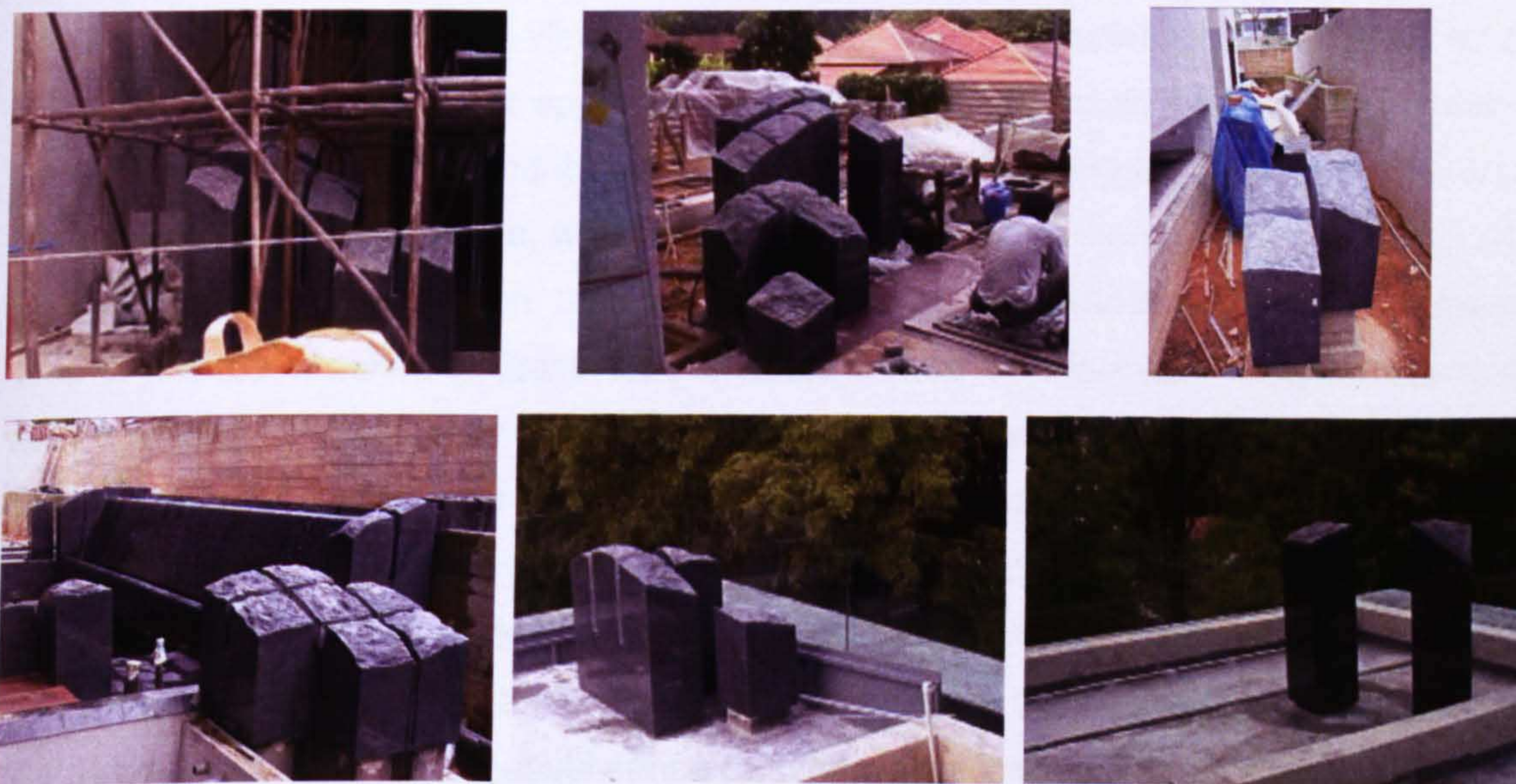


Image 87: *Stone traces*, Cluny Hill, Singapore (Refer to video from DVD Disk, Appendix 30)

Walking into the property, I am immediately confronted by the uphill slope of the driveway. The entrance wall directs me to a void created between the retaining wall and the architecture. Before me is the first of the series of *Stone Traces: Series 1 - West Water*. The stone and bamboo are recessed in this void and yet forthcoming enough to be noticed. The contrast of the natural dark granite and the fair faced concrete strikes me as something powerfully quiet. It has an unassuming presence. I imagine the finished form with the bamboo. I think it will be discrete and subtle. As I walk on I remember now that

Series 1 - West Water was to disguise the maid's entrance and avoid the eye from penetrating too deeply into the building. Proceeding up the drive towards the entrance of the building the second series of stone pieces within a small bamboo grove presents itself – *Series 2 - East Bamboo*. It extends into the paved area almost as if directing me into the building. It is here where I am up close to the work that I can scrutinize and touch the stone. This series is smaller in size than *Series 1* but nevertheless strategic in its placement. The natural lighting is different and the bamboo proposed presents a natural context with filtered light created on the stone, quite different from the darker recess of *Series 1* with the building and retaining wall as a backdrop. I go up the steps and into the building. On the second floor the living space opens to the pool and on the left is the third series of *Stone Traces: Series 3 – Boulders* - comprising of three stone 'boulders' two of which are immediately visible from within the living area through a horizontal slot window near the floor and the third is placed in a stepped down planter at one level down. All are of the same character as the previous two series but in this case it requires venturing out of the building onto the wood terrace, which enables me to look along the side of the building to appreciate its composition. The view from the window was only a 'teaser' to induce investigation from the viewer. The siting of this third series implies that the work is meant to be viewed but not approached. Returning back to the living room I proceed across to the dining room and its back garden. My initial glimpse is through the room to the edge of the water feature, which quickly opens up to an elongated view of the entire cascading water feature where the source of the water will emanate from once completed. This is the fourth series of *Stone Traces* called *Series 4 - Mountain*. It is a collection of seven pieces that abstractly represent a topographical form of a miniature mountain – a specific request from Master Tan. I move out and around the stone pieces that are now seen as distinctly separate and detached forms but strongly relating to each other. I venture deeper into the work and sit on the polished granite blocks created as seats for one to relax and pause. It is a pleasant feeling to imagine being amongst the bamboo and the stone. It gives me an unusual sense of security like one was in an abstracted cave in the hillside. Perhaps it is due to the stone on two sides, concrete behind, and the sense of an overhead enclosure from the bamboo. It is a soft feeling but with all the windows I have the sense of being on a stage of sorts, as if one were looking at me.

The final series is at the top of a circular staircase that leads to the roof top where the meditation room is located. As I reach the top I walk to the right, towards the light and before me is a 180 degree panoramic view towards the botanical gardens, a view that is too familiar to document as if I was seeing it for the first time. This is where the last series of *Stone Traces: Series 5 – Terrace*, is sited. As I walk the pathway around the perimeter,

the work is sited on both extreme sides not framing as originally intended (See Image 86) but as points marking a spot around which I can follow the meditative walk that surrounds the terrace.



Image 88: Model options explored (Refer to PowerPoint Show from DVD Disk, Appendix 28)

There is an enclosed room to the left that is set into the building, allowing for meditation within an air-conditioned space. From the mediation room the view is more contained and framed. It is as if one were looking at the view from the safety of a cave, but in this case a purely architectural one. The walk around the perimeter is deliberate that follows the rigidity of the architectural form and disciplines my movement. In contrast to this limited and controlled walking experience is the freedom of the eyes to view without constraint almost all directions, enjoying distant views of the *Singapore Botanical Gardens*. The path is only wide enough for one person to walk comfortably, and the edges of the movement are guided by the glass balustrade on one side and the planting edge on the other. The experience of such a controlled notion of walking corresponds with the level of control one must maintain in order to properly practice a meditative walk. Now I sit and contemplate with ease, with views of the *Singapore Botanical Gardens* beyond and the memories I myself have had enjoying those gardens for the past 23 years of living in Singapore.

Post-Reflective Thoughts

My first impression of revisiting *Stone Traces* after some time is its immediate simplicity. It may be so simple that if one did not have sufficient time to absorb the work it may not engage the viewer and it may get prematurely dismissed. It takes time to understand its full depth and meaning and only after a certain amount of time is spent does a convincing impression emerge. The work is less about the mass of the stone presented and more *about the voids for they offer more clues to the intention of my work*. The voids are what *connect the pieces and induce the viewer to make this connection* in their own mind. Extending this notion of making a mental connection, *the work then could be understood to expand beyond the site, leaving the feeling that the works are infinite without beginning*

or end. The impression is the experiencing of only a portion of a much larger entity even though one cannot physically view it in its entirety. Although not consciously considered at the time of its inception, it is interesting to note that this notion of only seeing 'the tip of the iceberg' is a frequently used interpretation for understanding Zen meditation gardens and has appeared as one of Noguchi's tendencies that I will highlight later. Perhaps the feeling of infinite views to the Nature of the *Singapore Botanical Gardens* inspired me to somehow imbed aspects of something beyond the site.

The grid of the saw-cuts is a series of voids created by an intervention on the stone. This one simple idea gives a visual structure to an otherwise natural material. It is a systemized aesthetic gesture that is the evidence of my intention to control the work. By a process of subtraction the stone is altered whereby the stone's own integrity is maintained and respected for its own essence as a natural material. There is an equilibrium reached between that which is altered and that which is kept in its natural state. It is a similar balance that is struck with regards to the way the *Singapore Botanical Gardens* is managed where one is not there to experience Nature, the way Nature really is, but to experience Nature altered in order that other activities such as research, recreation and tourism can be carried out.

My tendency to have the work configured or systemized and then misconfigured as if done through some disruptive external force resurfaces in *Stone Traces*. The configuration of the fragmented pieces implies that its original state was whole and united. After the 'disruption' it has now changed and reached a state of equilibrium that leaves the pieces in a state of engagement with one another but not physically connected.

The architecture is benched into the hill and *Stone Traces* accepts a similar position in relation to the terrain. The difference here is that rather than following the architecture by echoing the slope of the land with its overall form, the *Stone Traces* metaphorically replaces the natural slope with an abstracted topography of natural stone as if a gesture of putting back into the environment what was taken away.

My thoughts through the process of developing this work were to keep it simple and distilled. With five locations I concluded that all the work required to be of the same spirit thereby having a single consolidated expression of the same material with the same grid pattern and disconnected composition throughout the property. The material and processes also needed to be simple, direct and undemanding. The use of granite blocks was the least complicated and there seemed to have a certain compatibility with the fair

faced concrete of the architecture. Perhaps it is because both materials are without pretence that they could coexist in the physical context of the natural land?

I believe, to a large extent, that this simplification of the work was a result of my meditative practice during the process as I found a certain correlation between the rhythm of my breathing and the cutting of the stone in making of the work. The cutting of granite blocks is a very loud acoustical operation; however, in the making of my video the cutting sound is more of a background murmur. What one is experiencing is the visual rhythm of a back and forth motion of the stone being slowly and gradually intervened by the circular saw. It is the repetition of this saw cutting movement over an extended period of time that I sensed parallel patterns in rhythm of my breathing, with the in and out breathing, there is a pause similar to the rhythm of the stone cutting having a pause when stopped to move in the opposite direction. It is as if the stone captures the rhythm of the breath in the process of it being cut. Making something in stone ironically implies that it will be permanent, as in the expression 'cast in stone', whereas this cutting involves the breaking down or dematerialization of the granite through the creation of a series of voids, leading to an impermanence in physical form and composition.

Is *Stone Traces* contemplative? To me, there exists a sense of calm in the work where space is differentiated as necessary. *Series 4 – Mountain* is differentiated from the concrete walls that are retaining the soil thereby containing the space like a box. In contrast, *Series 5 – Terrace* has worked not by differentiating space but by borrowing its adjacent views of the *Singapore Botanical Gardens*, similar to the Japanese concept of *shakkei* which has immediate contemplative qualities.

Is *Stone Traces* a place? Two contextual considerations have been made. One is acknowledges the different levels of material and control, and the physical environmental context of being in a notable place of Nature near the *Singapore Botanical Gardens*. This in turn locates the work back to its place in Singapore. The second is the work's reference to the cultural considerations of the geomancer, Master Tan. His requirements provide the guidelines that result in *Stone Traces* being unique to only that location with only that client. The validity of this rests with owners who strongly believe that these requirements are specific. The geomancer's comments establish the client's optimal relationship with the land, the environment and Nature itself, so in this regard it makes the work relevant to its cultural and environmental place.

Within *Stone Traces* are specific places to pause and sit, which are integral to the work. In *Series 4 – Mountain* there are granite seats as part of the composition. It feels like a

sanctuary where one could retreat and sit, surrounded by the natural grounded elements of stone, bamboo and water, all of which are conducive to experiencing a sense of contemplation not only within the work itself but extending to the dining area that adjoins the work.

In *Series 5 – Terrace* - the feeling is different. It is of prospect and openness. The space is an architectural setting with a foreground, offering a generous view of Nature beyond to the *Singapore Botanical Gardens*. This strong aspect of *shakkei* – ‘borrowed scenery’ is complimented by either the formal place to sit in the air-conditioned room or the informal place to rest and sit at the eastern corner of the contemplative walk. These places of pause induce a sense of calm and reflection not created so much by the work itself but by the feeling one gets from looking at distant views of natural environment on the horizon.

It occurred to me that as I was on this upper most floor reflecting on the entire work of *Stone Traces*, the last work *Series 5 – Terrace* – brings the viewer to a type of end, similar to *Domon Ken Museum* where one must now physically return back along the same route from where one came. There was now a necessary retracing of one’s experience back to the beginning.

Series 4 – Mountain and Series 5- Terrace addresses how the occupants of the house relate to the work. Having places to pause within, around and on the work meant that they could relate to the work at different levels of engagement. Every possible effort was made to slow down the experience, encourage pause and sitting, create a space of relative calm and/or respect the natural context of the site with its offsite views to Nature. Although it ultimately depends on the viewer, this is an environment that in every sense induces the opportunity for one to have a contemplative experience within a natural environment.

The work has visual appeal; however, I question the high polishing of the sides of the dark grey granite. My intention was to highlight the contrast between the natural split of the stone and the grooves that have been machine altered. By polishing the surface of the granite, it brings out a darker tone of color and creates a reflective surface that catches one’s eye. My question is whether I could have left it as a machine cut finish. I feel it would have been more direct and honest. Polishing the stone indicates almost a pretense of trying too hard to make something aesthetically pleasing. I also wonder if the composition is too predictable, again feeling as if this predictability is an aesthetically driven motive to make the work ‘look good’. Upon reflection I feel the last few pieces of *Series 5 – Terrace* where they break away from the architectural grid are liberated and

more meaningful because they break the rules of the composition that appear staid and predictable. (See Image 88)



Image 89: *Stone Traces: Series 5 – Terrace*

The title *Stone Traces* originally signified the markings of my intervention on the stone. Now I also realize that the work traces the origins of the terrain by appearing as a remnant that marks a *place* on the slope at different levels – a staking of one's territory of sorts.

Conclusion: Summary of My Findings and Future Directions

i. My Processes Evaluated

My practical research continues to be a series of experiments in finding the most effective processes towards creating *contemplative places* with “a meaningful sense of calm”. The results of these processes have varied. Those that seem to work remain and are refined while the others are changed or discarded. Using three case studies, two of which have been realized, has enabled me to evaluate each stage in my process of research. My conclusions are as follows:

a. Researching *place* takes time

Time has proven to be the main constraint when faced with the task of the factual and experiential research analysis of *places* particularly when they have an extensive history and/or culture. Researching *place* requires not just time itself but the passage of time which emphasises the expansiveness over a period time with as much importance placed on the pauses between visits as the time on the site itself. The notion of passing time by its very nature cannot be rushed. Although a natural acceleration of this process could occur with practice, it is a stage of work that requires multiple visits over time in order to understand the *place* to its fullest.

Time based artist Bill Viola speaks of time and space in his processes that are in parallel with what I am testing. He describes that “when time and space open up there’s a lot of room for you. In quiet moments you get an idea, or a thought, or a revelation that you wouldn’t have had if you were in a hurry to get somewhere. Our lives require quiet innocent moments like these, so we absolutely have to make spaces – particularly in our world of compressed time- or else the spirits will get choked off.” He goes on to say that “we have to reclaim time itself, wrenching it from the ‘time is money’, maximum-efficiency mentality, and make room for it to flow the other way... towards us. We must take time back into ourselves, to let our consciousness breathe and our cluttered minds be still and silent”. (Baas and Jacob, 2004, p. 254)

To reiterate Viola, “We have to reclaim time itself”, will enable us to experience the pauses, the patiently waiting, the meditation, and the phenomenological reduction processes. It ultimately means making decisions of what one chooses not to do which will allow room to be made and time “to flow the other way... towards us.”

What I have also found more effective is to weigh my research time differently depending on the depth of experiences offered from the site versus the context of the

region. At times the site by its very nature requires more time such as *Stone Traces* next to the *Singapore Botanical Gardens* where one wants to spend time listening and understanding the *place* as it exists with all its subtle nuances. In other sites like *Art Gardens within a Tea Garden* there is a barren desolate site with little or no existing sense of *place*. In these instances the time spent on site is better minimized doing only what is necessary for the factual analysis and spending the rest of the time researching and experiencing the local and regional context.

b. Discovering contemplative experiences

Finding existing contemplative experiences that are unique to its *place* is one technique that I have uncovered to get to the essence of the site and its region more effectively. A variety of ways have been explored. One technique is to find where the local people relax and pause. For example, one of the most relevant references of my research for *Art Gardens within a Tea Garden* was Guo Zhang Villa, a historic private estate open to the public. I discovered “eddie” of people mingling, drinking tea, painting and sketching, playing cards, smoking or just relaxing and strolling through the garden. I found inspiration to practice for myself what these experiences were. The historic villas have been a place of contemplation for generations over thousands of years. Finding contemplative experiences that are significant to their location has proved challenging, and in some cases means finding the day-to-day routes that people travel and observing the quieter activities that happen along the way. Although they themselves may not find their activity relaxing, it may be relaxing and contemplative if viewed as a spectator. It could be an artist painting, a man rowing a boat or a group of elders practicing Tai Chi. It is in these places – some of them in the nooks and crannies of the vernacular landscape – that one discovers life genuinely lived with all its gritty shortcomings as well as its own charm. It is typically casual, rustic, and without pretence; the natural behaviour of human beings. They fit in and are part of the *place*.

Other areas of investigating contemplative experiences are found in places of prayer and worship. Although this research does not extend into specific religions or religious places, it is interesting to discover how traditional places of spiritual respect, peace and tranquillity are experienced. The quietude of such places as churches, temples, shrines and cemeteries are experienced and documented as a reference. In the case of *Holding In Place* in Malaysia it was the Muslim cemetery behind the site that provided a reference of a culturally relevant contemplative experience that I then used in an abstracted form in my own work.

c. The Contemplative Circuit

Reflecting upon how I use the contemplative circuit, I realize that the notion of an endless journey that repeats itself in circles liberates me mentally. I also find myself walking out of my studio to the corridor to escape the visual intensity of activities and materials happening within. The corridor provides a different kind of calmness for thought and reflection even with the disruptions of people passing by.

The meditative seating I originally incorporated into the circuit is not successful. It would only be used very early in the morning, before the studio was in full operation. It is difficult to find a quiet moment to practice meditation in the middle of the day's activities. Ideally it should be a separate room used only for the purpose of meditation, away from the studio activities - or a differential space without visual or acoustic interruptions and distractions.

d. Research Narratives

A positive aspect of the research narrative is disciplining the artist to account for an experience when it is created. It reveals potential oversights, shortcomings and assumptions made before the experience of the works is realized. As the narrative emphasises the sequencing of when and how experiences are to unfold, I have determined that it is more effective to use a narrative where the sequence is crucial to its success. For example, the *Garden of the Forgotten Rocks and the Beginning of Water Garden* in China proves that the technique of research narratives is effective as there is a conscious sequencing of spaces and experiences being created. On the other hand the narrative would be less effective in a place such as, *Holding in Place* where the viewer may enter and exit from any point among many others making it difficult to determine which sequence of the experience can be anticipated.

The major limitation with doing a narrative of the anticipated experience is that the description is only one account of what one can expect to experience. As such it prescribes only one ideal scenario of what one could expect to experience and yet in reality the variations on this experience are infinite particularly if one were to address each different conditions such as changes in time of the day, week, month, or season, the pace at which one moves through the gardens, which route one chooses, the age and condition of viewer, the garden and the plants, and whether one stops and sits or quickly rushes through the garden. Therefore what the narrative is capturing is only one

possible scenario of many possible experiences and hence puts its overall effectiveness into question.

Even with this shortcoming its strength makes the effort worthwhile. As a research tool the narrative writing emphasizes the experience with all its intended subtle nuances and complex layering as intended by the artist. It is anticipated that this document could then be used for future reference when testing against the completed works.

e. Model Making and Video Recording

Although the model making is time consuming and labour intensive, it proves to be an essential tool for visualizing and experimenting with the experience of space. Model making is a not an unfamiliar tool for designers and artists. Noguchi did not trust drawings to convey the true spirit of his projects and instead always used models for studying and communicating his works.

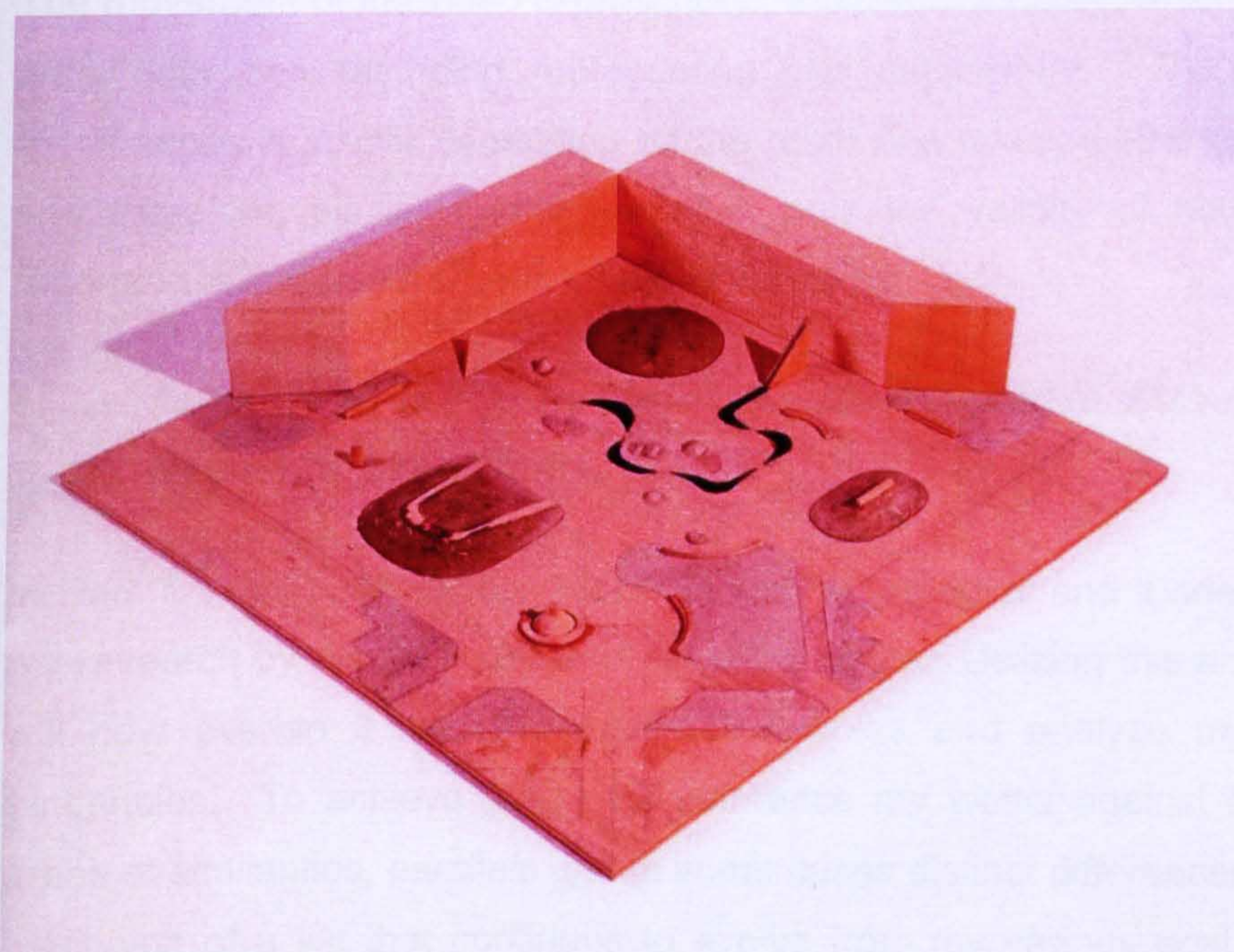


Image 90: Model of *California Scenario*, Isamu Noguchi, Plasticene on wood, 228 x 550 x 550 cm, Costa Mesa, California
Source: Archive of The Isamu Noguchi Foundation, Inc, Long Island City, New York

The model making and video recording processes however are not without any problem. Limitations of videoing within a model became obvious. For example, the miniature camera, although wireless, is difficult to manoeuvre and keep steady. At most times, it is a crude attempt at documenting an experience and does not fully represent the movement of the eye or the body. The simulation is awkward at best. As one can see in the videos

that I used in the documentation, it is difficult to keep the camera at exactly the viewer's eye level as one moves through the model. In some instances this has drastically affected the perception and experience of the space. It is hoped that as technology improves, the wireless miniature camera will enable me to work with more ease and flexibility. Until such time comes, it will take more practice to produce a video of satisfying quality.

The most limiting aspect of modelling and videoing is that the camera only captures the visual aspect of the experience and does not conjure up the human senses of the body such as what one might smell, feel or hear as they move through the space. In this respect it is the recording of the visual sensory experience only. Interestingly, the combination of using the narrative together with the video recording provides a more comprehensive account of the experience to be anticipated for the written narrative describes the other missing senses.

The movement of the video is prescribed, a dictated journey, which is determined by the artist with one recording representing one experience. The number of different experiences is infinite depending on the route one takes, where one turns, pauses, etc and therefore, similar to the narrative, puts the validity of how representative this recording is into question with so many variables.

ii. Analysis of My Own Works as *Contemplative Places* with Reference to Noguchi's Sited Works.

In Part 1, I concluded with a list of Noguchi's strategies and tendencies that I conducted my research by analyzing three of his sited works. Utilizing this analysis as a template, I will now overlap it with my three sited works and analyze my own strategies and tendencies. To achieve this, I will reference my works against Noguchi's and identify areas of similarities, parallels and in some cases distinct differences. The following is the beginning of a list that continues to evolve from my various post reflective thoughts of Noguchi's works as well as mine.

a. The Identification and/or Creation of *Differential Space*

In a similar way in which Noguchi chose to work closely with architects, I also found it necessary to develop a strong collaboration with architects to ensure that *differential space*⁵⁸ was present or created. My methodology is to examine the architectural design of

⁵⁸ See page 19.

the location where my work is so that the essence of the space is understood. The intention is to establish, maintain or possibly enhance spatial differentiation by minimizing distractions. It then entails recommending to the architect a series of options that explore various solutions for creating an environment of relative calm.

In the case of *Art Gardens within a Tea Garden*, the architectural master planning of the surrounding buildings was readdressed and subsequently changed, including the massing, density and building heights around the garden, to establish an acceptable level of spatial differentiation. The result is a stronger sense of enclosure and a distinct separation from the busy roads around the perimeter of the site. *Holding in Place* was a close collaboration with the architect to explore possible interior/exterior relationships of spaces with the need to isolate the inner courtyards of the building from the city traffic and general urban noise and pollution. The result was a glass-enclosed space that by creating a quiet sanctum acoustically separated the clear, quiet state of relative calm established inside from the urban street life outside. In *Stone Traces: Series 4 – Mountain*, the space was differentiated through the siting of the work between the architecture and the retaining wall of the slope. The sense of enclosure is intimate with narrow spaces created and distracting views limited. A further differentiation of space is created within the work itself with the composition of the stone, water, bamboo and pebbles, creating a small sitting area that feels separated from the rest of the garden. In *Stone Traces: Series 5 – Terrace*, the view to the *Singapore Botanical Gardens* is not a distraction but the essence of the work. In this particular case, the air-conditioned architectural enclosure for meditation is used to differentiate the indoor space from the outdoor space as the tropical heat is the distraction instead of the view.

b. Controlling Space as an Artist and a Landscape Designer

Noguchi and I both seek to control the experience of the work through the manipulation of space. Apart from collaborating with the architect on the building and its relationship to the surrounding environment, I have found, like Noguchi, that it is necessary to act as both the designer of the landscape and the artist in order to control the experience and achieve the contemplative qualities. The interchanging roles enable a stronger dialogue to be established between the art and the landscape. The marked difference is that Noguchi, as a sculptor, tended to prioritize his sculptural objects and controlled the landscape environment with the intention to enhance his objects. My priorities are different. The emphasis I make is on the experience of the overall environment as an art form and the

sculptural objects are utilized to reinforce this experience. This is one of the most fundamental differences found in the way we approach our works.

What would Noguchi do in the following situation, is a question I often ponder. In a project such as *Stone Traces*, I would speculate that Noguchi would not create all the work of the same material or spirit in the five different locations. In all likelihood he would have created five distinctly different pieces because he would have seen each location as a separate opportunity to create an object with its own integrity and spirit. This I believe is a result of Noguchi having more of a fondness for creating objects than creating an experience that relates to the overall whole of all five works. Turning the situation around, if I were given the opportunity to do a project such as *California Scenario*, I believe I would have tried to find a way in which the seven scenarios could more strongly relate to each other by placing more emphasis on a unifying experience of the overall works rather than emphasizing the creation of each work as being individual.

c. Creating the Experience of Pause

In my process, I consciously address the importance of a pause experience in my work which is dissimilar to how Noguchi worked as he seldom consciously incorporated a pause experience in his works. By doing it inadvertently or secondarily, the outcome appears more artificial and out of tradition or necessity. For example, the stone bench in the sunken garden of *The UNESCO Garden* is an obvious place to pause but appears more as a traditional necessity when considering its context of being in the *Jardin Japonais*. Likewise in *California Scenario* the prospect for pause are found throughout his work but the more obvious opportunities to sit are addressed functionally by using stereotypical landscape furniture. (See Image 23) These elements do not fit into the spirit of the work and appear to have been done out of necessity. In contrast I placed the importance of integrating the experience of the pause into the artworks as a priority, taking into careful consideration the experience of that pause through the view, orientation, location, material, etc.

Apart from sitting, there are other opportunities for creating an experience of pause that was earlier mentioned. The viewer can simply stand, lean or even walk, and yet be of a still mind, to appreciate a view, possibly ponder and potentially experience a contemplative moment. In fact any aspect of the work that can induce a slowing down experience to take people out of the normal hustle and bustle of a busy day will constitute a potential contemplative moment. It could be a lawn to lie down or a ledge to lean on as long as it is conducive to relaxing by being a comfortable place. In essence a pause is

any opportunity that encourages the viewer to stop walking, or at least slow down, even if just for a moment, reflect, contemplate and/or meditate. I believe that Noguchi and myself have both achieved several aspects of these pause experiences in each of our three works, respectively.

d. Referencing of the Regional Context

In *California Scenario*, Noguchi's interpretation of the regional environments is his most obvious effort towards making his work directly relevant to its context. Although Noguchi never attempted to do this again, it was his most significant and meaningful endeavour up to that time. What is interesting to note is that the work is layered beyond what it seems on the surface— a representation of the Californian environments. *California Scenario* also reveals aspects of the artist himself, with his combined Japanese and American biases, which strengthens its references back to its location.

In her book *Noguchi: East and West*, it was earlier noted by Dore Ashton that the composition of *California Scenario* is analogous to a Japanese stroll garden. (1992, p. 276) One could still question the appropriateness of a Japanese inspired work located in California. Noguchi was born in Los Angeles and although he had no strong emotional attachment to California, he was a first born descendant of a Japanese immigrant, one of many during that time. In this respect, it could be argued that there is a social appropriateness towards a Japanese influenced composition for *California Scenario* since the Californian community has always had a large percentage of people of Asian descent.

Another aspect that locates *California Scenario* is ironically the theatrical nature of his work is a contrasting notion to Zen principles. The experience of moving through *California Scenario* is a liberating one, as if on a stage, providing a freedom of expression through the utilization of space. Having personally lived in Asia for over 23 years, I sensed this immediate openness in the work and found it to be culturally different to experiences of public spaces in Asia. This liberating feeling seemed appropriate as it was somewhat synonymous with living in America, particularly California, as opposed to Asia where there is more cultural and political control over the individuals. The expression of *California Scenario* is of self autonomy and free choice, sensed particularly in its open plan circulation and movement. It is unlike the *UNESCO Garden* and *Domon Ken Museum of Photography*, where the movement, direction and even pace of experiencing is so tightly controlled.

My work, by contrast, is less literal in its referencing to regional contexts and limited to abstract expressions of regionally and locally sourced experiences of calm. My work *Beginning of Water Garden* is the abstraction of the ancient garden grotto which is an experience of being in a retreat from the mainstream circulation of a garden. I believe the essence of this experience is captured in the model and expresses not just calm, in general, but a specific sense of calm that is referenced to the regional context of historic private estates where these grottos still exist.

In the works *Holding in Place* in Malaysia the regional experience of calm was found in the immediate neighbouring property of the Muslim cemetery. Maintaining the intimate and unassuming scale of the stone markers, I recreated the experience through the use of glass and light as a way of locating the work, in this instance by marking a place of life as opposed to death.

In the works *Stone Traces* in Singapore, the experience was one of personal meditation on the site of the works. I meditated in the context of the natural environment that extends from the *Singapore Botanical Gardens* to the site. The experience abstracted was my personal relationship with Nature, expressed in this instance through my meditation. The result was the rhythmic expression articulated in the stone as a trace of the physical terrain but ultimately it was also a trace of my breathing in conceiving the work.

e. Grounded Nature and Impermanence

The materials used in Noguchi's work are natural. They are from the land such as stone, plants, water, etc., all innately comforting to the average person as it has a sense of permanence and a grounded nature. The siting of these materials are typically in a natural relationship to the ground where it expectedly abides by and acts in accordance with the laws of gravity, further reinforcing this notion that Noguchi's work is 'grounded'. It is my belief that Noguchi used stone extensively as a way of locating himself or leaving 'his mark' in this world through his work. As a nomadic artist, he was continually travelling and leading a life of constant change. His work acted as a counterpoint to his lifestyle by being permanently grounded into the site.

I use many of the same natural materials in the creation of *contemplative places* as Noguchi did. The marked difference is that I make a conscious effort to emphasize, through my use of the materials, the contrast between what is permanent and what is impermanent. The notion of *wabi-sabi*, which are principles found in Noguchi's work, particularly the eroding nature of the basalt stone figure at *Domon Ken Museum of*

Photography, is part of the similarity of my work to Noguchi's but not all of it. Without dwelling on the metaphysical idioms associated with what is and what is not, I would simply state that nothing is permanent including one's own existence. My tendency is to use stone and make its permanent nature partially broken down as if it is completing a natural cycle of returning back to the ground. This involves an intervention on the stone to be fractured, offset, cut, disjointed, or eroded over time. The intention is to provide a contrast between what is grounded and what is impermanent. I believe this contrast offers an invaluable opportunity for the viewer to reflect on not only the immediate understanding of the materials being impermanent but that everything is impermanent including oneself. It is hoped that thoughts of this nature could momentarily take one beyond one's day-to-day concerns of living and think about one's life as it exists.

Each of my sited works has this tendency of revealing a contrast between the grounded nature of a material and a sense of the impermanent. The only one exception is in my case study of *Holding in Place* where the glass is an abstract expression of the stone markers found in the Malay cemetery. In the transformation from stone to glass (silica sand), there is also a transformation of the markers locating and signifying death to something that now locates and signifies life. Although it is not a physical breaking down of materials, it still addresses issues regarding what is represented as being grounded and permanently marked in the ground and what is impermanent as the nature of glass which is more vulnerable to fracturing, cracking and shattering.

f. Disruption, Equilibrium towards a State of Relative Calm

A distinct aspect found in my works that differs from Noguchi's work is the nature in which the elements are sited. In each of Noguchi's works the objects are "grounded" in a stable and permanent state. By contrast my work has a noticeable feeling of having been disrupted and a subsequent equilibrium being established. It follows the premise that in order to express a state of calm one needs to contrast it with a disruptive state. Post reflections of my own work revealed inclinations towards purposefully activating my work through destabilizing an order or predetermined system/condition which may have been previously embedded in the work. This creates a suppressed state of instability in the work suggesting that the condition is in a state of flux.

In the case of the *Garden of the Forgotten Rocks*, it is implied that the walls of this garden originally formed a square. By purposefully fragmenting and disjointing the walls, there is a sense that the work has been destabilized, unhinged, conveying a sense of impermanence. The pavement is also opened up in order for the viewer to take note of

this intention. The next work *Beginning of Water Garden* reinforces this notion of impermanence. One experiences the movement between the forms as fragmented pieces conceivably fitting together into a whole, like pieces that form a puzzle. The reward at the top is viewing the poem in pieces and the viewer needing to mentally connect them in order to read it. In some respects this fragmentation could be abstractly interpreted to represent the unsettled feeling of relocated local people that are disjointed from their land for this development to be possible. The changes of unprecedented capitalism have brought about tremendous change much of which has had a negative impact on the local communities.

Creating contemplative places through apparent acts of disruption may appear an unorthodox approach. This notion of creating a sense of disruption to emphasize calm needs explanation. An otherwise permanent, stable, and secure condition is disrupted. What now presents itself is the work in a state of equilibrium, a balanced circumstance. The work appears in a state of reconciliation where the differences between opposite forces have reached its point of equilibrium, holding each other in check. The tension creates a charged nature in my works which is a result of the work being stationary but captured in this point of balance. It is of permanent materials but subject to change over time as if in a state of flux. The work is balanced between what is stable and what is unstable, permanent and impermanent, and flanked by what is arising and descending and ultimately ceasing to exist. It is in this state of equilibrium that a type of *check* is held in place defining the balance that charges the work.

The assumption, as a result of this research analysis, is that this moment of equilibrium can induce a contemplative experience and can be tested if questions are raised concerning the metaphysical issue that nothing is permanent. It is my belief that by raising the awareness of such issues through the work the viewer could likely project the same questions of impermanence upon themselves. Even thinking for a moment of one's own impermanence would constitute a contemplative moment that takes their thoughts beyond their day-to-day concerns. In its best scenario the work would induce an illumination in the viewer, providing not only insights into the work itself but within themselves.

iii. *Meditation, Contemplation and Relationship with Oneself*

Noguchi did not practice meditation. Referring back to Noguchi and his exposure to Zen, Bonnie Rychlak noted that "Zen practice demands time and effort, whether in meditation or in conversation with a master, but Noguchi had no time for either. As with his artistic

involvements, he was able to draw from Zen without uniting with it.” (2002, p. 12) Listening to Noguchi’s narrative on the video titled ‘*The Creative Adventures of Isamu Noguchi*’, it appears to me that he wanted his audience to view him as a philosopher of metaphysical notions in his beliefs and personal convictions. Although he may not have meditated in the formal sense, it is apparent that he contemplated and reflected on things with considerable effort. This is perhaps why his work holds an aura, not clearly understood at a glance, as there are layers of understanding quietly embedded in his work that can only be revealed over time by an engaged viewer.

Meditation is not only a part of my life but also a part of my processes in creating my works. The practice of *meditation* means being alone with oneself for extended periods. I typically begin *meditation* in the early morning, which then changes to contemplation as I work and go through my processes throughout the day. Finally, at the end of the day and early evening when things are quieter, there is the post reflective stage that is invaluable for providing insights into my own work. In many instances there is a continued revisiting of works with the attempt to uncover even more issues than what seems already buried in my work and/or processes. As a tool, my meditative practice and contemplative circuit has allowed me to step away from my situation and put some distance between me and my work, thereby allowing me to evaluate myself, criticize my work and assess my processes.

By formalizing meditative, contemplative and post reflective practices, I have increasingly trusted the processes involved to the degree that all present and future commissions go through this method of practice. I firmly believe that a contemplative place can be created in various ways if a process such as the one outlined in this thesis is considered.

Referring back to Cartiere’s conclusion⁵⁹ that relationships are the central aspect which differentiates place from just space, I have realized that the nature of my work in creating *contemplative places* has seen a pattern of relationships fostered that involves a relationship with oneself. In the moon gate experience of the *Garden of the Forgotten Rocks* and the grotto experience of the *Beginning of Water Garden*, both are meant to be experienced individually as you move through the forms. It is a technique to have one being with oneself even if just for a moment and to have meaningful experiences of calm and retreat on an individual basis. The intention of *Holding in Place* is to have one reflect upon one’s own existence when experiencing an abstracted vigil that identifies and marks life as opposed to death. The experience of *Stone Traces* is also personal and individual.

⁵⁹ See page 15.

As the owners practice meditation it is about providing not only the opportunity for one to have a relationship with Nature as viewed from the terrace overlooking the *Singapore Botanical Gardens* but more importantly to have a relationship with oneself. Each of my sited works have consciously encouraged the opportunity for the viewer to reflect upon and possibly connect with one's own existence.

iv. How the Criteria of *Contemplative Place* Developed

The cyclical nature of my research allowed for the criteria of *contemplative place* to evolve over the course of this thesis. Beginning with the visits and analysis of each of the three Noguchi's sited works, I was able to identify a framework of criteria that defined what made his work both *contemplative* as well as being a significant and meaningful experience as it related to each location. With the experience documented for each of the works, I was then able to cross-test this preliminary criteria against the other two Noguchi works to find out if there was a consistency or difference in which *contemplative place* was achieved. While visiting Noguchi's work over a couple of years, I researched, in parallel, through my own practice of developing my works and through my writing. By doing so I was able to retest Noguchi's work against my findings by reviewing the videos and pictures of the visits. In some cases, my own work as well as the definition of terms and the criteria for *contemplative place* changed and evolved. By actually revisiting Noguchi's works proved to be far more powerful as it reconfirmed or invalidated my findings forcing me to re-evaluate my criteria. My own work proved to be my fundamental research area as I was able to change the work at the various stages of the process to test out issues of creating environments of relative calm, identities specific to its location and the opportunities for my work to foster relationships. In some cases it was apparent that the work itself was effective as a *contemplative place* and the criteria needed refinement instead.

The criteria for *contemplative place* have continued to evolve even at the time of completing this research and should be subject to open and continuous evaluation.

v. An Overall Evaluation of My Practice in Researching Criteria for *Contemplative Place*

Each stage of my process has been tested with varying results as previously noted and demonstrates a methodology that works specifically for me. As this research could be carried out differently by other researchers, it is prudent to evaluate the worthiness of my process from which others can learn.

As an overall assessment of my process there are pertinent aspects of each stage that are worth highlighting and are listed in order of effectiveness:

- a. Allowing segments of time to research *place* is a fundamental aspect. I have found that the segmentation of the visits with specifically planned pauses of not being on the site is critical to my ability to analyse effectively. This extended passage of time provides the moments of reflection and contemplation between visits that can then be confirmed on the following site visits.
- b. The second most effective stage of my process is the utilization of my contemplative circuit. I have found it is the one disciplinary routine that best allows me to process information. As a practitioner of meditation it is particularly effective and is my way of distilling the excessive amount of factual research and experiential research analysis. The circuit assists me to seek out the essence of the site and the regional experiences and many times is a vehicle towards a *phenomenological disclosure*.⁶⁰
- c. The model making for the purpose of exploring the experience of the works is irreplaceable. With all the shortcomings of the video techniques, it is still the best methodology to test out the way in which one actually moves through and experiences the space. It was found that the miniature camera used with the physical models was a crucial tool within my processes. The obvious alternative would have been the use of three-dimensional computer modelling thus allowing for a 'fly through' simulation, eliminating the need for physical models. However, as an artist, the making of physical things as the outcome of my work logically translated to my wanting to have the physicality of the model making be a natural part of my process. Even with the disadvantages of the camera handling, model material and varying results of the actual experience, it was far superior than working with computer imaging which is heavily time consuming to manipulate as a working tool but more importantly conveyed a feeling of a sterile, stiff and repetitive experience that seems more like an unbelievable, ideal and faultless environment. It is my opinion that, at the time of doing this research, the technology of computer imaging still lacks the ability to convey an intuitive feeling or a genuine emotion to the same effect as physical models.
- d. Discovering place-specific contemplative experiences that exist already could provide some invaluable insights and inspirations if appropriate ones can be found. Typically these are places of worship or remembrance and need to be approached with care in terms of their appropriateness to the site. However, it could prove as

⁶⁰ See page 23.

a worthwhile starting point to inspire the works. If it can be found, the best is to observe the behaviour of local residents in states of pause and contemplation which can then provide meaningful clues as to how places foster relationships that are specific to their culture.

- e. Probably the least effective are the specific narratives of the experiences as they are limited in their application. It is only where the sequence of the experience of the work is critical that it is highly valuable.

vi. Future Directions

This research only examines three of Noguchi's sited works. He completed a total of 73, several of which could be researched. Works that were in close contention for being case studies for my research, in order of priority as having *contemplative place* qualities included: The *Billy Rose Sculpture Garden*, Israel, 1965, *Sogetsu Flower Arranging School*, Tokyo, 1978, *Supreme Court Building*, Tokyo, 1974, *Chase Manhattan Plaza* 1964, New York, *Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library*, Yale University, New Haven, 1964, *Memorial to the Dead*, Hiroshima, 1952, *Play Mountain*, Hokkaido 1934, *Noguchi Garden Museum*, Long Island, New York 1985 and *Noguchi Studio*, Mure, Japan 1969. Many of these works, if carefully studied, could offer further evidence as to the strategies and tendencies that Noguchi used to create *contemplative places*. If these works were critically analyzed through the processes utilized in this research, it could provide a wealth of new information that would take this research to another level by confirming or contradicting the strategies and tendencies presented here. It is also likely that to use this research as a point of departure would uncover new strategies of creating *contemplative place* in Noguchi's work.

It has proven an invaluable process to evaluate Noguchi's work to determine the strategies and tendencies he used. Doing so has subsequently raised various questions about the definitions of *contemplation* and *place* as well as my own practice as an artist. It has forced me to ask new questions about my own works in determining if what I was doing was successful in making *contemplative places*.

During the course of this research there has been an immense change in my practice as an artist and landscape architect. Over the past several years I have been fortunate enough to now have clients seek me out for those projects that offer new opportunities to continue my research of *contemplative places*. This has allowed my efforts to remain concentrated, focused and without distractions. For this research a total of five projects were seriously considered for the case studies, from which only three were highlighted.

The other two works located in Seychelles and in Libya are at various stages of design and construction, each one addressing different environmental, historical, cultural and social contexts. Further research opportunities exist with these projects as well as others in the future.

The definition of *contemplative place* needs to come into question and be subject to continuous modification. *Contemplative place* has progressed in its definition considerably over the course of this research and will continue to evolve so through the extended research by myself and others in the future. The separate definitions of *contemplation* and *place* must also evolve to be relevant. A good example of *place* being redefined is what Miwon Kwon proposes. Kwon's prognosis of the current art directions *seem to be drifting away* from the importance of the site as well as the need for identity to be bound to the physical actualities of a place. *She states that a site has become an "intertextually coordinated, multiply located, discursive field of operation"* (2002, p. 159) which celebrates the nomadic condition of our present day existence. She makes reference to James Meyer's term of *functional site* which is a conceptual shift from grounded work to what addresses the ideas of "open, unfixed constellation, porous to contingencies" (2002, p. 160) thereby "establishing authenticity of meaning, memory, histories and identities as a differential function of places" (2002, p. 157) Kwon's concerns about the implications of this shift questions our intentions as artists.

If one were to analyze and experience a place thoroughly the amount of time required would be considerable if not indefinite. One could argue that the only way to understand a place is to actually live a life in that place, as a resident, and not merely "parachuting" in for a visit as an artist. This is a heavily debated topic. In February 2005, a conference called "Situations – The Wrong Place: Rethinking Context in Contemporary Art" was held in Bristol, UK. The questions raised amongst others were, "Do the specifics of location override the specifics of art in the commissioning of art works in response to particular contexts? Has site-specificity been replaced by context-specificity? Is parachuting artists into given situations an inevitable outcome of the globalisation of art production?" All of these are valid concerns that bring into question what the future definition of *place* is and the relevant issues that would be raised by redefining it.

An obvious extension of this research would be to assess these new definitions of *place* and apply these notions as a form of new criteria in re-evaluating the work of Noguchi as well as of my own.

Interestingly, the conference "Situations – The Wrong Place: Rethinking Context in Contemporary Art" cited Miwon Kwon's book *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* which represents her notion that the future of place may not be inextricably meshed with the physical place. Kwon proposes that "It seems historically inevitable that we will leave behind the nostalgic notion of a site and identity as essentially bound to the physical actualities of place." (2002, p. 164) What is interesting about this conference is that it raises further questions as to what is the right or wrong place to focus one's research of *place* on. Should one be addressing context research versus *place* research? How does one deal with the globalisation impact on *place* and is it actually more appropriate for artists as outside visitors to research *place* than as insiders to live at the site and understand its sense of place?

To answer these questions about the future of art and its relation to *place* is probably as elusive as defining what art is itself. I support the opinion that if the mainstream of the art world goes out to find its "globalised" answers to identify with a place and fails to relate with its physical site, there will be a sense of transition in a world that is already moving too fast. Regardless of what the critics and scholars are predicting, it is of my opinion that there will always be a longing for place to be "grounded" to the physical actualities. To re-quote Merleau-Ponty on the importance of relating to the *ground* that situates us with the world, he states: "This maximum sharpness of perception and action points clearly to a perceptual *ground*, a basis of my life, a general setting in which my body can co-exist with the world." (2005, p. 292)

It is my firm belief that *place* will not be spaces of transition but just the opposite, places of pause and contemplation. Globalisation by its very nature tends to ignore the individual; it loses the privacy of the person and makes us obsessed with our part of some larger entity, beyond a scale that we can comprehend and relate to. In the long term, the reaction to globalisation may very well be the opposite. Rather than embrace globalisation, there will be a rejection and Lucy Lippard's "*Lure of the Local*" and Cameron Cartiere's importance of relationships will be central to our thinking about what constitutes a *place*.

The wider potential of this research would be the application of Noguchi's strategies and to a certain extent the findings of my own strategies to analyse and question the works created by other artists and designers who deal with the same or similar issues of contemplative, meditative or reflective environments as spaces or places. The works of artists such as Bill Viola, Micheal Rotondi, Rirkrit Tiravanija are worth an examination.

Architects Tadao Ando and Yoshio Taniguchi have aspects of contemplation in their work while other architects such as Daniel Libeskind and Raymond Moriyama have made similar approaches as my own towards creating contemplative experiences through disruption and equilibrium in their architectural forms such as the Jewish Museum in Berlin, Germany and the National War Museum in Ottawa, Canada respectively. Landscape architects Peter Walker, Masayo Masuno and Robert Murase are practising as designers of contemplative environments all of whom have been differently influenced by Noguchi's work. Hopefully, this research will raise new issues that will shift the thinking and questioning of future researchers, artists, architects and landscape designers who focus on this topic.

Through this research I have gained insights into Noguchi as a human being and an artist. Having researched a segment of Noguchi's path that deals with contemplation and place, I continue to evolve and develop my own unique path, through my own writings and practice.

KEY TERMS

Unless otherwise referenced, all key terms are defined by the author in this thesis as noted.

abstract intuitive expressions: a term formed as part of this research which is a form of documentation of an experience that is created, composed or choreographed as an art form as part of the experiential analysis that can otherwise not be adequately expressed through conventional factual research analysis. (i.e.: poetry writing, sketching, sculpting, photographing, videoing, painting, dance, music etc.)

abstract space: space which tends toward homogeneity, towards the elimination of existing differences or peculiarities

calming meditation: deep concentration states, culminating in a one-pointed trance, usually devoid of all sensory awareness or mental flow though also able to entertain with great stability a fixed picture or even a full environment. It is thought-free concentration without expectation of any long term transformation.

contemplation: a clear, quiet, and calm state of the mind that induces insightful thoughts beyond one's day-to-day concerns

contemplative place: a space where a meaningful sense of calm could be experienced

contemplative space: a void between an object and the viewer that induces a contemplative state of being

differential space: space that eliminates abstract space. It assumes for this research that the expression of the work is done in a different environment relative to its context, and in most instances this difference is in its higher level of calmness and lower level of sensory stimuli. There needs to be a state of relative calmness compared to its immediate surrounding environment. In most cases, this would mean a reductive landscape environment that reduces or minimizes sensory stimulation.

hanamichi: literally means a 'flower path' traditionally found in the Japanese theatre which is the walkway the actors use to enter and exit

insight or transforming meditation: mindfulness insight (and) imaginatively creative visualizing meditation that are considered most important in psychological, intellectual and spiritual development [and] are closely related to reflective states

meditation: this is a learned practice to eliminate distractions of sensory perception and thoughts, in order for one to experience the immediate moment as it exists

mindfulness: the ability to remain in a relaxed but alert state thereby allowing one to experience and remain in the present moment as it is

phenomenological disclosure: the point from which the researcher sees the phenomena with more exact clarity. It is a moment of insight and a point of breakthrough. Described as “revelatory seeing” or “pristine encounter.”⁶¹ It is through this central means of research that one can experience moments, whereby “the phenomenon reveals something about itself in a new or fuller way.”⁶²

phenomenological intuiting: a process of distillation that brings “deeper clarity in which the (researcher) sees the phenomenon in a fresh and fuller way.” (2000, p. 170). In each instance, it would require the researcher to enter a relaxed but alert state of concentration in order to take on information at a higher level of awareness and sensitivity, because the one that is more intuitive allows things to be taken in more subconsciously, rather than objectively. The intentions are to experience the phenomena “in as free and unprejudiced way as possible so that it can present itself and be accurately described and understood.”⁶³

phenomenological reduction: a process of distillation involving both phenomenological intuiting and phenomenological disclosure

place: is a space which is relational from a historical, cultural, environmental or social context concerning itself with identity and fosters relationships through experience over time

⁶¹ (http://www.arch.ksu.edu/seamon/Seamon_reviewEAP.html, 2005).

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

place-specific: works of art created in relation to particular physical spaces or topographical conditions – either indoors or outdoor – to such a degree that their character would be changed if moved somewhere else⁶⁴

radical empiricism: where understanding arises directly from the researcher's personal sensibility and awareness rather than from the usual secondhand constructions of positivist science (Seamon, p. 22)

sabi: beauty in the imperfection accompanied by antiquity or primitive uncouthness. The artistic element that goes into the constitution of *sabi* literally and poetically means 'loneliness' or 'solitude'. Aloneness indeed is contemplation and does not lend itself to spectacular demonstration." (1959, p. 24)

shakkei: the Japanese garden design practice of "visually enlarging one's domain through a garden's composition. By establishing an engaging foreground and manipulating the middle ground to screen unwanted elements, it can incorporate distant scenery as an active background." (Treib, p. 71)

tokonoma: a traditional Japanese way of using small spaces typically found in a historic Japanese house.

wabi: the concept that less is more utilizing a 'one-cornered' composition. A restrained primitive simplicity and economy of gesture are the essence of *wabi*. (2002, p. 18)

⁶⁴ Cameron Cartiere, 2003 *Re/Placing Public Art: The Role of Place-Specificity in New Genre Public Art*.

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List of Appendices (Total time: 1h 46m 29s)	Time
<i>Part 1</i>	
Appendix 01 - Robert Irwin's <i>Getty Centre</i> (MPEG Video)	02:50
Appendix 02 - Robert Murase's <i>Myodo Kyokai</i> (MPEG Video)	03:25
Appendix 03 - Peter Walker's <i>Stone and Moss Mountain</i> (MPEG Video)	04:30
Appendix 04 - Noguchi's <i>The UNESCO Garden</i> (PowerPoint Show)	
Appendix 05 - Noguchi's <i>California Scenario</i> (PowerPoint Show)	
Appendix 06 – Noguchi's <i>California Scenario</i> (MPEG Video)	14:59
Appendix 07 - Noguchi's <i>Domon Ken Museum of Photography</i> (PowerPoint Show)	
Appendix 08 - Noguchi's <i>Domon Ken Museum of Photography</i> (MPEG Video)	11:57
	<hr/>
	Total: 37:41
<i>Part 2</i>	
Appendix 09 - Okashimo's <i>Processes</i> (PowerPoint Show)	
Appendix 10 - Okashimo's <i>Studio, Singapore</i> (MPEG Video)	06:43
Appendix 11 - Okashimo's <i>Studio, Xiamen, China</i> (MPEG Video)	08:50
Appendix 12 - <i>Stone Cutting, Xiamen, China</i> (MPEG Video)	00:45
Appendix 13 – <i>Art Gardens within a Tea Garden, Working Models Development</i> (PowerPoint Show)	
Appendix 14 - <i>Art Gardens within a Tea Garden, Landscape Concept Design Report</i> (PowerPoint Show)	
Appendix 15 - <i>Art Gardens within a Tea Garden, Site and Regional Analysis Report</i> (PowerPoint Show)	
Appendix 16 - <i>Garden of the Forgotten Rocks</i> (MPEG Video)	02:03
Appendix 17 - <i>Beginning of Water Garden</i> (MPEG Video)	01:24
Appendix 18 - <i>Couple Sweeping Leaves</i> (MPEG Video)	00:29
Appendix 19 - <i>Bamboo Grove</i> (MPEG Video)	01:10
Appendix 20 - <i>Distilled Moon Gate Experience</i> (MPEG Video)	00:30
Appendix 21 - <i>Holding in Place, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia</i> (PowerPoint Show)	
Appendix 22 - <i>Holding in Place, Landscape Concept Design Report</i> (PowerPoint Show)	
Appendix 23 – <i>Zouk at Night, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia</i> (MPEG Video)	01:15
Appendix 24 – <i>Holding in Place Model</i> (MPEG Video)	02:41

Appendix 25 – <i>Water Candle</i> Process (MPEG Video)	00:48
Appendix 26 - <i>Holding in Place</i> , Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (MPEG Video)	14:28
Appendix 27 - <i>Holding in Place</i> , Survey Interview (MPEG Video)	12:11
Appendix 28 – <i>Stone Traces</i> , Cluny Hill, Singapore (PowerPoint Show)	
Appendix 29 - <i>Stone Traces</i> , Landscape Model Design Report (PowerPoint Show)	
Appendix 30 – <i>Stone Traces</i> Model(MPEG Video)	05:31
Appendix 31 – Feng Shui Consultant’s Recommendations (PowerPoint Show)	
Appendix 32 – <i>Stone Traces</i> , Cluny Hill, Singapore (MPEG Video)	10:00
	<hr/>
Total:	68:48

Please note the following:

The DVD disk is in +R format and may not be compatible with all commercial DVD players. The disks have been tested on numerous computer DVD players and work with Power DVD, QuickTime, and Window Media Player. (See the troubleshooting insert below for instructions and suggestions)

Troubleshooting Insert

1) Videos

- a) As the video is in *mpeg* format. Most DVD player in computer should work. Best played in *Windows Media Player*.
- b) Should the video not play; please see the Help Topics on the relevant player by simply pressing F1 button for Help.

2) Power Point Slide Shows

- a) As the PowerPoint Slide Show is created using *Microsoft Office 2003 professional (PowerPoint)* software, please check that you have the relevant software.
- b) See Help Topics for other relevant troubleshooting by simply pressing F1 button for Help.